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CAMBRIDGE STUDIES  
IN  
MEDIEVAL LIFE AND THOUGHT  
Edited by G. G. COULTON

FIVE CENTURIES  
OF RELIGION

IN FOUR VOLUMES  
VOLUME II

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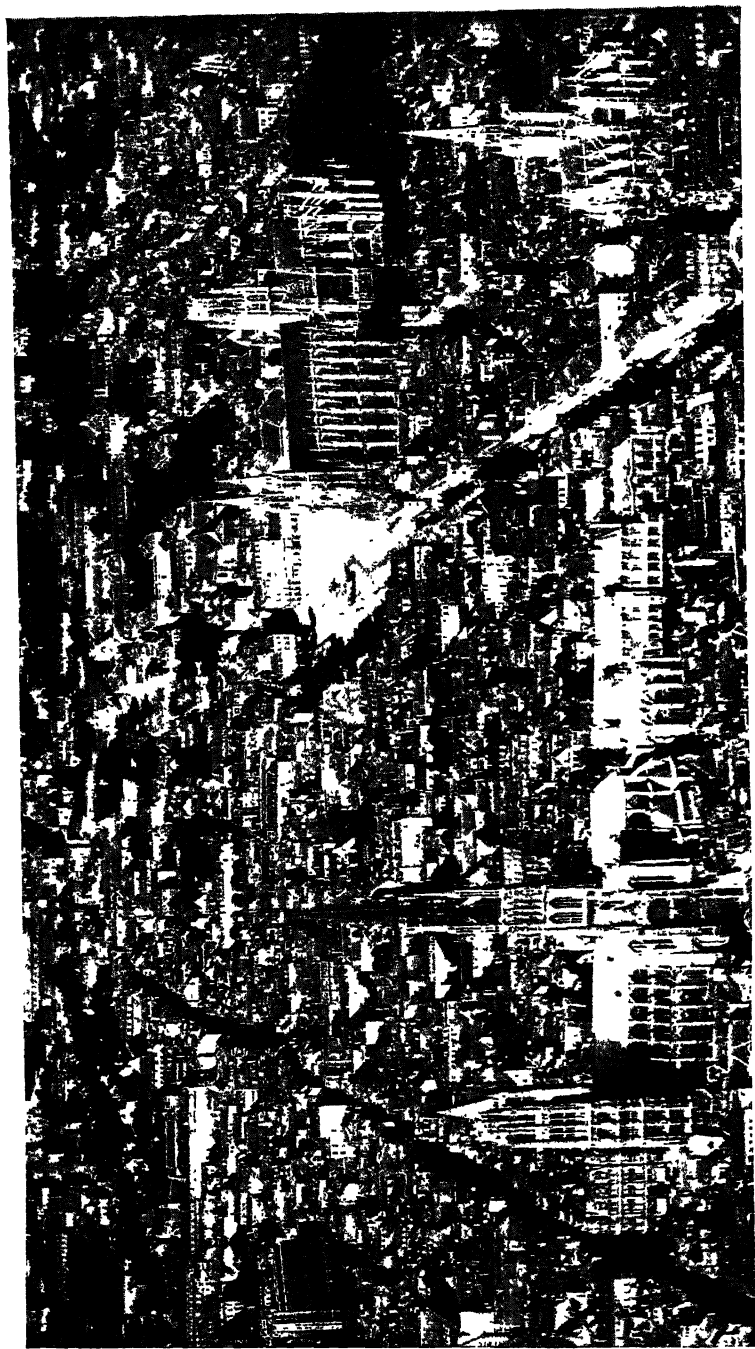
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ROUEN FROM AN AEROPLANE

# FIVE CENTURIES OF RELIGION

BY

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LECTURER IN ENGLISH

VOLUME II

THE FRIARS AND THE DEAD  
WEIGHT OF TRADITION,  
1200-1400 A.D.

CAMBRIDGE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1939



"Certainly in these days of ours [about 1190 A.D.], however we may condemn and scoff at our own times, there are some who would fain keep the Faith, and who, if they were put to the test, would lay down their lives like the men of old for their Shepherd and Lord Jesus; but, under the impulse of I know not what zeal, our own times have grown vile to us as an iron age, and we have taken a fancy to the past as an age of glittering gold [Read past records]; observe the envy of Cain, the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah, not one only but all alike stewing in lechery, [and so forth]; note those innumerable monstrosities, continued from the earliest days down to our own, and you will then cease so proudly to abhor the like things, or less vile things, done in our own day. But, because the sense of evil is more grievous than the hearing thereof, therefore we say nought of what we hear, and mourn for that which pains us; rather let us reflect that things have been worse, and keep some measure with regard to these [present evils] which are more tolerable."

Map, *De Nugis*, ed. James, p. 61

TO  
S. B. C.



## GENERAL PREFACE

THERE is only too much truth in the frequent complaint that history, as compared with the physical sciences, is neglected by the modern public. But historians have the remedy in their own hands; choosing problems of equal importance to those of the scientist, and treating them with equal accuracy, they will command equal attention. Those who insist that the proportion of accurately ascertainable facts is smaller in history, and therefore the room for speculation wider, do not thereby establish any essential distinction between truth-seeking in history and truth-seeking in chemistry. The historian, whatever be his subject, is as definitely bound as the chemist "to proclaim certainties as certain, falsehoods as false, and uncertainties as dubious." Those are the words, not of a modern scientist, but of the seventeenth-century monk, Jean Mabillon; they sum up his literary profession of faith. Men will follow us in history as implicitly as they follow the chemist, if only we will form the chemist's habit of marking clearly where our facts end and our inferences begin. Then the public, so far from discouraging our speculations, will most heartily encourage them; for the most positive man of science is always grateful to anyone who, by putting forward a working theory, stimulates farther discussion.

The present series, therefore, appeals directly to that craving for clearer facts which has been bred in these times of storm and stress. No care can save us altogether from error; but, for our own sake and the public's, we have elected to adopt a safeguard dictated by ordinary business common-sense. Whatever errors of fact are pointed out by reviewers or correspondents shall be publicly corrected with the least possible delay. After a year of publication, all copies shall be provided with such an erratum-slip without waiting for the chance of a second edition; and each fresh volume in this series shall contain a full list of the errata noted in its immediate predecessor. After the lapse of a year from the first publication of any volume, and at any time during the ensuing twelve months, any possessor of that

volume who will send a stamped and addressed envelope to the Cambridge University Press, Fetter Lane, Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4, shall receive, in due course, a free copy of the *errata* in that volume. Thus, with the help of our critics, we may reasonably hope to put forward these monographs as roughly representing the most accurate information obtainable under present conditions. Our facts being thus secured, the reader will judge our inferences on their own merits; and something will have been done to dissipate that cloud of suspicion which hangs over too many important chapters in the social and religious history of the Middle Ages.

G. G. C.

*February, 1920*

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE critics who found repetitions or omissions in my first volume may find still more in this; for there has been an interval of eight years between the first chapter and the last, with many personal and public interruptions; and it is always easier to remember an anecdote than to remember whether we have told it before.

Nor am I likely to give more satisfaction, in this second instalment, to those who disagreed with my conclusions in the first; not that I have failed to weigh their objections carefully, or that I depreciate their scholarship; but, in the last resort, I must prefer the evidence of actual contemporary documents. For this, in effect, is the invidious choice forced upon me. None of my critics has produced medieval testimony against my main facts; and those who have allowed themselves to suggest that I must have darkened the picture by omitting favourable evidence have been quite unable, when challenged, to specify what is supposed to have been omitted. I am censured, therefore, for not having printed words which, so far as either I or my critics know, do not even exist; I am required not only to interpret in a sense satisfactory to my critics, but even, like Daniel, to tell them their own dream<sup>1</sup>. I am grateful to them for having, by their mere general disapprobation, compelled me to proceed with greater caution; but, while this has not changed my views on any important point, it has certainly cost a good deal of labour and time, and has swollen to two that which was originally planned as a single volume<sup>2</sup>. It has led me not only to review again, but to offer to my readers, a mass of evidence on the most contentious points, viz. the evidence underlying Chapters xvii to xxix, and Appendixes 17 to 39. Readers can now judge not only my foreground, which I had originally thought sufficient for the picture, but also that background of facts and ideas which has been more or less clear

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for this and other details mentioned in this preface.

<sup>2</sup> The second instalment will consist of a series of chapters illustrating diet, domestic economy, occupations and other similar factors in the daily life of the Religious.

in the writer's mind all along, but with which I had not intended to trouble the reader until it became necessary to meet what has certainly been a formidable challenge. I cannot hope that this evidence, in the present state of medieval studies, will be accepted as final; but at least it may bring us one step nearer to that roughly-agreed verdict which none of us, perhaps, will live to hear. And, in so far as my quotations shock accepted historical conventions, they may suggest that each department of social or religious life needs separate and special study, since each has its own law of development, so that the profoundest familiarity with one or more departments will not conclusively supply (though it may be of great value in suggesting) the answer to problems in some other field.

Two reviewers complained of the large proportion of Continental cases cited in my first volume; this was altogether accidental. Monasticism had the same ideal everywhere in the West, and its practice was so nearly the same from country to country that the burden of proof lies not upon the writer who would illustrate English by French conditions, but upon him who would forbid such illustrations. There were certain national differences, which I am not conscious of having neglected anywhere; among others, there is the fact that English monasticism, like English life in general, was rather better disciplined than on the Continent. But I deliberately adopt the method which offends some reviewers, of bringing together in each case the greatest possible diversity of testimonies, whether for place or for time. Common sense seems to suggest that, where witnesses are fairly unanimous, their testimony is not weakened but strengthened by their variations of time and place; and it consoles me to find that a scholar like Caggese claims special value for such discursive testimony, in his *Classi e comuni rurali* (vol. I, p. 160 note). The very diversity of places (he argues) in which we can manage to trace the same conditions, makes those conditions all the more symptomatic. When, therefore, my reviewers have taken this proceeding to mean that I have neglected important distinctions, yet without specifying (as, I believe, none has ventured to specify) any case in which I have in fact confused the evidence by such want of discrimination, then it has left me as impenitent as when they blame me for not

using the latest texts, yet are unable to specify a single case in which my older text has led me into error. If such accusations of false method cannot be supported by any proof of false results, then they amount to no more than Monsieur Jourdain's objection: "Tu me poussees en tierce avant que de me pousser en quarte." I write for readers who think for themselves. These will not fail to detect me if I ever suggest that, *because* such and such a practice existed in A.D. 1500, *therefore* it existed in 1200, or *vice versa*; but, on the other hand, they will be grateful for the light thrown on history by the fact that certain things were done not only in 1200 but in 1500, not only in one country, but in two or more.

And they will excuse me also, I hope, if I spend as little space as possible in repeating things which are admitted everywhere as commonplaces, whether favourable or unfavourable to the monastic institution. I wrote in volume 1: "The Religious Orders have been among the main forces of European civilization; at certain times and in certain places they may perhaps have been the greatest of all civilizing forces"<sup>1</sup>. If anything in any of my volumes seems to contradict this, it is only that I have expressed myself ill. But, if I did not expand this statement then, and if I do not repeat it now at every turn, the reason is that it is taught as a commonplace even in school histories. At this stage, the historian's main business is to indicate the limitations within which this general statement is strictly true; in other words, to weigh the institution in the critical balance. With the individual men and women who peopled the monasteries I have as much sympathy, perhaps, as those who dissent most widely from my conclusions. For the institution, again, I have the respect which is due to all great achievements of the past. But I do not think that any monastic historian, at this present day, can be faithful to his duty without showing clearly why monasticism, as a world-institution with enormous endowments and extraordinary privileges, is already a thing of the past; why the monastery is no longer one main factor in the state but a matter of private and individual choice. Nor has

<sup>1</sup> p. xxxiv; cf. pp. 185, 436. Compare, in my Appendix 10, Lingard's answer to a correspondent who criticizes him for not emphasizing well-known things.



this care been merely one-sided. Many of the details in this volume are taken, necessarily, from modern monographs on separate monasteries or on side-aspects of monasticism. The large majority of these are by Roman Catholics; but some are by Protestants; and in these cases I have tried not to cite them without warning, unless the matter be a plain matter of fact or textual evidence from medieval documents. Whenever I give the author's unfavourable verdict, or his summary of a medieval document, as approximately definitive, it is because he is a Roman Catholic and therefore presumably not biased against the monks.

Here and there it has seemed useful to supply lists of bare references in corroboration of different important points. Most of these are transcribed straight from my original notes, and there has been no time for a second verification; sometimes, therefore, they may be found defective. But I print them in confidence that, on the whole, they will prove of real assistance to the few readers who may care to follow up one point or another a good deal farther than my text alone would take them.

At the very last moment, two scholars have suggested farther evidence in corroboration of Chapter xxvii; this will be found briefly stated in Appendix 41.

G. G. C.

*June, 1927*

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### ROUEN FROM AN AEROPLANE . . . . . FRONTISPIECE

By arrangement with Messrs Crété of Paris.

The large mass of houses is everywhere medieval in effect, and often even in detail: it is probable that forty-nine out of fifty occupy the same ground-space as in the Middle Ages, with the exception of the three great boulevards which were driven through the city some seventy years ago, and of which two are seen here. About five-sixths of the site of St-Ouen's abbey, which extended northwards and eastwards to the city walls, may clearly be traced here; readers who have patience to count will probably find that the whole area occupied as much ground as about four hundred medieval citizens' houses. A bird's-eye view of the abbey, as it was about 1690, will be found facing page 208 here.

### NO. . . . . TO FACE

#### 1. THE PORTIUNCULA AT ASSISI . . . . . 128

From a photograph kindly supplied by the Rev. W. O. Cosgrove.

The tiny original church, round which the church of St Mary of the Angels, with its great dome, has since been built. The photograph shows some of the votive offerings with which it is hung round.

#### 2. BROTHER WILLIAM THE ENGLISHMAN . . . . . 168

Reproduced from *Collectanea Franciscana*, vol. 1, p. 2, by kind permission of Prof. A. G. Little and the British Society of Franciscan Studies.

The drawing is one of the illustrations in the famous MS. of Matthew Paris (*Corpus Christi Camb. ms. xvi*). It is accompanied by another drawing of Christ by Brother William himself (*Collect. Franc.* p. 4). Of this friar we know little beyond the fact that he was one of St Francis's most intimate disciples, and that he is said to have shown his obedience even after his death. "Brother Elias—seeing that Brother William of England, layman, who had been perfect in religion, being buried in the basilica of St Francis, was coruscating with great miracles—moved by zeal for St Francis, went to his sepulchre and commanded the dead man with much confidence and faith not to darken the glory of the holy Father Francis. From that time he performed no more miracles."

#### 3. THE BASILICA AND CONVENT OF ASSISI . . . . . 176

From a photograph by the Rev. W. O. Cosgrove.

Built over the tomb of St Francis by Brother Elias, from 1228 onwards. It rests on an immense undercroft of buttresses and arches, and the church crowns the whole.



NO. TO FACE

4. THE ABBEY OF ST-OUEN-DE-ROUEN IN ABOUT 1690 A.D. . . . . 208

From a series of drawings executed for the Benedictines of St-Maur to illustrate their projected *Monasticon Gallicanum*, under which title the plates alone were at last published by Peigné-Delacourt in 1871. The present view is reproduced from vol. II, plate 122.

5. HUMBERT DE ROMANS . . . . . 386

As conceived by Fra Angelico, and represented among the crowd of Dominican worthies in the predella of the altar-piece of San Domenico at Fiesole, now in the National Gallery in London (no. 663, Christ surrounded by Angels, Patriarchs, Saints and Martyrs).

6. THE LADDER OF SALVATION . . . . . 400

From Herrad v. Landsperg's *Hortus Deliciarum*, ed. Straub and Keller, 1879-99.

Herrad was abbess of the great nunnery of Odilienberg; her encyclopaedic work was begun at least as early as 1159, and she died in 1195. This is perhaps the most elaborate extant example of a pictorial moralization which was sometimes represented in churches as an alternative to the Last Judgement scene (*e.g.* at Chaldon in Surrey).

The inscriptions run as follows:

(A) General remarks. On the left side of the ladder, beginning at the top:

(1) "This ladder signifieth the ascent of virtues, and the religious exercise of virtues, whereby the crown of everlasting virtue is won. Very many set foot at first upon this ladder, but afterwards they are wounded by the devil's arrows and are drawn backwards, and are terrified by impediments and seduced and led astray by their own lusts and are wickedly brought down."

(2) "Demons with their arrows attack those who climb aloft."

(3) "Seven are the steps whereby men mount to the kingdom of heaven: (1) chastity, (2) scorn of this world, (3) humility, (4) obedience, (5) patience, (6) faith, (7) charity from a pure heart."

(B) On the left-hand pole of the ladder:

(1) "This dragon lieth in wait for those who climb. All these, who perilously fall from on high, can be restored again to the height of virtues by God's medicine of penitence" [*i.e.* by the Sacrament of Penance]. Again, at the very top,

(2) "The Lord's Right Hand, the crown of life."

(C) Each of the figures has its own description, from top to bottom:

(1) "Virtue, that is, Charity. This figure of Virtue signifieth all the saints and elect, who are brought by angelic guardianship to celestial rewards. Now this virtue is Charity; for the virtue of Charity alone, which containeth the other virtues, shall attain to receive the crown of heavenly reward."

- (2) "The Angelic Guard."
- (3) "A Hermit. This Hermit represents false Hermits. Tilling his garden, and setting his mind upon his plantings with superfluous thoughts, he is withdrawn from his prayers and is banished from the sweetness of divine contemplation." Then, twice repeated, once under the flowering plant and once below, "The Hermit's Garden."
- (4) "The Enclosed Person" [*i.e.* Anchorite]. And, below the Hermit's garden, a luxurious bed, with the legend: "the Anchorite's bed, wherein he taketh his rest at his own will."
- (5) "This monk is a type of false monks, who gape after private property and money; this withdraws their hearts from divine service, and fixes them immovably in the place where their treasure is." The monk wears elaborately purfled sleeves, and has a purse at his neck, and in his hand a sort of money-belt, as may be seen by comparison with pl. LXXIII, where the same monk with his purfled sleeves is in hell, and a demon is pouring into his companion's mouth, from a similar money-belt, red-hot coins. Under the recluse's bed is a basin full of coin, labelled "the monk's money."
- (6) "This cleric, signifying all false clergy, is given up to rioting and lechery and simony and other vices; he falls backward and is far from going to earn the crown of life." Underneath the monk's money we have "The cleric's food; his fishes, his drinking-cup, his church"; and on the roof of the church sits "The cleric's leman."
- (7) "This Nun, who signifies all evil nuns, seduced by the courtship and the gifts of a priest, and drawn aside by the pomps of this world and her parents' riches, is turning aside, and reacheth not unto the crown of life." At her left is "The Priest," taking her hand and offering her money.
- (8) "This knight and this lay lady signify all faithless layfolk who, loving the varied adornments of this world, and spending their time in fornication, greed and pride, are cast down and are rarely raised to the contemplation of the crown of life." On their left stand "precious garments" (a robe of vair) and "cities." On their right, "cities" again, with "worldly ornaments whereunto layfolk give their attention," *i.e.* "horses," "shields" and "armed soldiers."

## TEXT-FIGURES

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- Map showing the possessions of Norwich Cathedral Priory in the county of Norfolk, drawn by Mr H. W. Saunders and kindly communicated for use here . . . . . 10
- Thirteenth-century Monastic Granary at the Cistercian house of Vauclair, near Laon. From A. Lenoir, *Architecture monastique*, Paris, 1856, vol. II, p. 411. It is nearly 230 feet long . . . . . 28
- Abbot's House at Much Wenlock, Shropshire. From J. H. Parker, *Domestic Architecture*, 1859, pt I, p. 145, and pt II, pp. 366-9 . . . . . 38-9
- "Its great and distinguishing peculiarity consists in the double gallery, which is carried on the west front of the house, the roof on that side being brought down so as to cover it. Of these galleries, one is on the ground floor and one on the first floor, and into these the doors of the various rooms open, the communication between them

being by a wide newel-staircase at the north end.... There appears to have been originally no external door to the building except those which open into the galleries." The key to the rooms on all stories is as follows: A. The Hall, or Refectory, with its roof. B. Kitchen. C. The Abbot's Parlour. D. Brewhouse. E. Dormitory. F. Dormitory in the roof. G. Apartment, with locker. H. Ditto. I. Staircase, leading to all three stories. J. Ditto, leading to the gallery and principal rooms. K. Oratory, with altar. L. Apartment modernised. M. Ditto. N. Garderobe. O. Ditto. P. Staircase leading to the Abbot's Dormitory.

The monastery of St-Bavon at Ghent, from a view taken in 1534 and preserved in the City Library there. In 1540, the Emperor Charles V demolished the greater part of the abbey in order to build a citadel on this spot; the few remaining fragments give some idea of its magnificence. See V. Fris, *Histoire de Gand*, Brussels, 1913, pp. 192-3.

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Explanation of the numbers on this sketch: 1. Église. 2. Bras nord du transept, derrière lequel se trouve la salle capitulaire. 3. Cloître. 4. Trésorerie, Quartiers des étrangers, etc. 5. Cuisine. 6. Réfectoire. 7. Pourpris de la vieille Abbaye. 8. Puits miraculeux de Saint-Macaire. 9. Brasserie de l'Abbaye. 10. Maison abbatiale. 11. Prévôté de l'Abbaye. 12. Jardin de la Prévôté de l'Abbaye. 13. Prévôté de Papingloo. 14. Prisons. 15. Entrée de l'Abbaye. 16. Maison de l'Aumônier. 17. Maison de plaisance de l'Abbaye (dans laquelle furent enfermés, du 23 septembre 1567 au 3 juin 1568, les comtes d'Egmont et de Horne). 18. Garenne. 19. Granges aux dîmes de l'Abbaye. 20. École. 21. Grand Cimetière. 22. Mur d'enceinte de l'Abbaye. 23. Guérite. 24. Gate Tower. 25-6. River.

Peasant's Cottage, sketched by the author on the basis of a description in the court-rolls of Halesowen Abbey in 1281

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Tithe Barn at Doultong. From a sketch by the Rev. J. L. Petit, about 1850

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Cloister of the Franciscan Friary at Yarmouth. By kind permission of Mr H. Olley of Great Yarmouth

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Cluniac Refectory at St-Martin-des-Champs, from A. Lenoir, *Architecte monastique*, vol. II, 1856, p. 334. It is more than 150 feet long and 30 broad; that of the abbey of St-Denis was 130 by 40

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## CHAPTER I

### FRANCIS AND BENEDICT

THE thirteenth century brings us, in one sense, to the heyday of medieval monasticism. The institution may have had more real vitality and solidity between 1050 and 1150; but for numbers and wealth, for general social and political influence, we may roughly choose 1200-1260 as the crowning period. For in these years we still find the last of the great medieval reforming Orders in their first fervour, while some among the older Orders are still their not unworthy coadjutors. When St Louis spangled his realm with monasteries as an illuminator inlays his page with painted letters<sup>1</sup>, these new foundations were not confined to the friars alone; the good king cherished his monks also.

Yet, between St Bernard and St Louis, much had changed, and much had happened which opened all men's eyes at last to changes of yet earlier date. This truth must be emphasized if we would fully understand St Francis, who takes the first place among single figures in this present volume, as St Bernard did in the first. There is one deep difference between the two men. Bernard's root-idea was to bring his monks back to original Benedictinism; he and his brethren would now prove that the naked Rule was not only practicable, but the one practical way to monastic salvation. Francis, on the other hand, who can seldom be accused of serious impatience and want of sympathy, was definitely unsympathetic and impatient with the Benedictine Rule. At the General Chapter of 1217, at which five thousand friars are said to have been present, with the Protector of the Order, Ugolino, cardinal bishop of Ostia and destined to become Pope Gregory IX, a determined move was made by some of the friars who "alleged the Rules of St Benedict, St Augustine and

<sup>1</sup> Joinville, § 758: "And even as the scribe, when he has written his book, illuminates it with gold and azure, so did this king illuminate his realm with fair abbeys which he built, and with that great plenty of hospitals and houses of Friars Preachers and Minors and other Religious which I have named before."

St Bernard" as models. Francis was thus provoked into a most unusual vehemence and assertion of independence: "Name unto me none other Rule, neither of St Benedict nor of St Augustine nor of St Bernard, nor none other way nor form of living save that which hath been mercifully shown and given unto me by the Lord." The cardinal was "amazed," and the brethren "sore afeard," at this uncompromising pronouncement<sup>1</sup>.

Why was the saint so bold here in his resistance even to that cardinal and papal Protector towards whom he was usually so deferential? Why did he see no hope for his own reform but in breaking with certain essential traditions of the older Orders?

The reason is not far to seek. One side of Francis's mission was a war against capitalism; and the monks had become one of the great capitalistic forces of the Middle Ages. St Bernard had already seen this clearly enough; he cast it in the teeth of his fellow-abbots of great houses who were attempting to obtain papal privileges of exemption. "Labour, and retirement, and voluntary poverty, these are the monk's insignia; these are wont to ennoble monastic life. Yet your eyes look unto all that is high, your feet tread every marketplace, your tongues are heard in every council, your hands clutch at all other men's patrimonies"<sup>2</sup>. To understand Francis, we must first realize the economic side of that monasticism from which he reacted. And, as this enquiry forms an integral part of any history of religion in the cloistered sense, so does it also of religion in its wider acceptance. A man's true attitude towards God may be roughly measured by his dealings with the poor; the Bible teaches that truth somewhat more explicitly than creeds or catechisms are wont to teach it. And, since the medieval poor were mostly agrarian, and since the study of their true condition is still at a rudimentary stage<sup>3</sup>, I must begin this volume with a brief sketch of the business relations of Monk and Peasant. We shall here see the cloisterer from a fresh and most significant angle; we shall catch side-lights upon his psychology, on his position in society, and on the religion of his age in its more practical forms.

<sup>1</sup> See full quotation in Chapter VIII here below.

<sup>2</sup> *De Off. Episcop.* c. ix, § 37.

<sup>3</sup> Nobody, for instance, even in Germany, seems to have published any exhaustive study of the mass of material to be found in the six volumes of Grimm's *Weisthümer*, or the similar collections for Tyrol.

The realities of old-world village life are often obscured by the mists of many intervening centuries; but they stand out here and there in scattered indications, which, when once we have marked them, rather increase than decrease the picturesque effect of that faint blue distance. There is no district, perhaps, where modern internationalism and medieval history overlap so completely as on the shores of the Lake of Geneva. Its only rival, before the War, was Rhineland with its tributary valleys of Lahn and Nahe and Main and Neckar; and of Rhineland we might say also, looking back upon it through the mists of eight centuries, what we may say here of the Canton of Geneva and the Pays de Vaud. St Bernard, blind with soul-sight, had no vision for this "Lake of Lausanne" at his very feet; a negligence which surprised even his contemporaries, though they looked with other eyes than ours upon "that much-lov'd inland sea." Of all the spots connected with this far-travelled saint, none is more familiar to the lover of nature, or more unforgettable in its wealth of sights and sounds and associations, than this. The southward-sloping fields of Vaud are tilled by a model peasantry. As we wander from village to village, from fold to fold of the mountains, from bay to bay of the lake, we find one unbroken scene of rural prosperity. Everything speaks of order and well-being. Meadowland and orchards, scorched vines on the slopes and cool chestnut or walnut-shade in the grassy hollows; the wayside torrent; the houses in their self-contained comfort; here is deep peace, but no mere passive and accidental peace; here is a population free today because the fathers and grandfathers fought and bled for freedom, and the sons are still trained to fight for it, in case of need, to the last man. Yet even here, not far below the surface, are abundant tokens of past tyranny and suffering; the peasants whom St Bernard saw by the lake-side were fast bound in feudalism and iron. The little village of St-Saphorin by Vevey is now a painter's paradise; but its present picturesqueness is an exact measure of medieval violence and peril. It stands a little above the lake, on a promontory of its own. On either side are level open spaces of far greater commodity for water-traffic or tillage; but the first need of the men who built that village was neither agriculture nor trade; it was defence. Therefore the road rises up to St-Saphorin

on the right hand and on the left; in front are the scarped rocks and the lake; only behind, where the village abuts upon the mountain, can it be commanded from above; and at this point stands the church tower, almost as square and solid as a castle keep. Its walls swell and thicken out towards the foundations, as do those of the whole church, to baffle miners or siege-engines; the rare lower loopholes of this sanctuary are barred and double-barred with iron<sup>1</sup>. There are only three entrances to the village; originally, perhaps, only two. At every other point than these, house stands against house in one lofty and continuous wall, rising far up without original opening of any sort, as in that Bible text dear to St Bernard: "One scale is so near to another, that no air can come between them." Within these walls, we zigzag up from house to house through such a labyrinth of vaults and arches that, even though there were no more defence than this, a handful of resolute men could hold any one of these street-corners. But there is more; two of the narrow fortified gateways still remain; and we realize that this little village had all the defensive advantages of the castles its neighbours. For the whole land is dotted with medieval castles; they catch the artist's eye at once from his boat; but he might easily miss the deeper historical significance of these picturesque watchtowers. The bishops of Lausanne and Geneva were among the great barons of Europe; their wars fill page after page of Church history<sup>2</sup>; in the latter half of St Bernard's century, a single bishop of Lausanne built four new castles. He and his penultimate predecessor led notoriously irregular lives. St Bernard had indeed solemnly exhorted the former, on his election, to remember his moral responsibilities<sup>3</sup>; but it was not easy for a feudal bishop to break with the current traditions of feudal lordship, and the average prince-bishop lived very much like the unepiscopal prince. Therefore self-defence was among the first necessities of life among the peasantry through whom

<sup>1</sup> For the serious defensive value of these Swiss churches in war see Götze v. Berlichingen's autobiography (Appendix 2). Bartels (p. 36) emphasizes the military value of the medieval village church in Germany. An episcopal visitation records that, in 1416/17, St-Saphorin contained "about 120 households" (*Mém. et doc. Suisse romande*, t. XI, 1921, p. 123).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. Ruchat, *Abrégé de l'hist. eccl. du pays de Vaud*, Berne, 1707, an. 1165 and *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ep.* 26.

St Bernard passed; other villages, though not always so definitely fortified as St-Saphorin, are still grouped on the edge of some ravine, rising from the rocks in an unbroken line of wall, and defensible as no English village ever was. In the uplands above the lake, under the great abbots of Romainmotier in the Jorat and of St-Claude in the Jura, many tenants enjoyed constitutional immunity from all but defensive levies; yet such calls for self-defence were very frequent; and, even in those more favoured districts, the medieval peasant saw more fighting than his modern descendant<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, exceptional as St Bernard's complete forgetfulness was, yet even the most romantic and observant of his younger companions must have pursued that lake-side journey amid gloomy distractions which we scarcely dream of. Human necessities have the first claim on the human mind; and the picturesque was a secondary matter in those days when the peasant tilled his vines under shelter of the nearest stronghold, but under definite menace from other strongholds hard by<sup>2</sup>. For the mere landscape, for the lake and the mountains, medieval Religion had scarcely more use than modern Industrialism has.

Those who shrink from facing these facts, and other facts that support them, miss the real enduring beauty of the Middle Ages, and are deaf to the true gospel of history. Bernard was great, not because he possessed more advantages than we, but because he fought fearlessly and untiringly for better conditions than those he found around him. The honest peasant who then took refuge from his oppressor at the foot of the Cross was admirable only in so far as he quitted the smaller things of life for the sake of greater things. Again, it is not only truer, but

<sup>1</sup> At Romainmotier, in 1395, the monks, "considering our evident profit for the priory and all our domain of Romainmotier, have graciously inclined our ear to the supplication" of the peasants, who had humbly represented that the convent's right of taking a deceased man's arms as heriot left them defenceless against Sir Guillaume de Granson, who "hath already robbed, together with his armed retainers, the said priory, the domain of Romainmotier, and all the goods of the said domain, and who always strives to rob it and invade it unjustly with all violence that he can muster." Henceforward, therefore, not only will the peasants' weapons no longer be taken at death by the monks, but they may not even be seized as pledges (Charrière, p. 679).

<sup>2</sup> I have given specific instances of this in *From St Francis to Dante*, ch. v, *ad fin.* and *The Medieval Village*, pp. 323 ff.



more inspiring, to trace in these beautiful places a land and a people slowly expanding to higher possibilities, than to look upon them as a lost paradise through which successive generations crawl downwards from debasement to debasement. On our choice between these two conflicting views depends our whole outlook upon present civilization, and all our hopes of future progress. The past age with which we are dealing was populated, like all ages, with men and women, good, bad or indifferent. The good did what they could to better the world, in the face of a large number of bad and a huge mass of more or less indifferent folk; but they had inherited certain difficulties which they could not wholly overcome, and which, in some cases, are with us still. The world was still staggering from the break-up of Greek and Roman civilization; the nearest approach to social equilibrium then possible was a class-dictatorship. God, it was held, had formed one class to command and another to obey<sup>1</sup>; and, though the result was certainly better than the absence of all direction and all obedience, yet its shortcomings were even more apparent to the men of that day than they are normally to us.

I have briefly described the genesis of serfdom in Chapter II of *The Medieval Village*. The break-up of the Roman Empire, and the formation of the semi-barbarian states of the Dark Ages, created what we call Feudalism, a society intermediate between the indiscipline of the invading tribes, and the organized bureaucracy of Rome. Men split naturally into three classes—the clergy, the fighters, and the workers who did their best to buy protection from the two superior castes. The Roman system of naked slavery was very slowly sapped by a variety of causes, among which Christianity was one. On the other hand, many freemen were glad to “commend” themselves to some lord, and to become “his men” for the sake of his occasional protection; others, again, were forced by lay or ecclesiastical lords into this position of dependence. The serf had, originally, no property of his own; all was his lord’s when the lord chose to take it. His own body, his marriage, his domicile, his family

<sup>1</sup> This is the general attitude of the medieval moralist, in spite of certain conventional egalitarian utterances which I have quoted on pp. 235 ff. of *The Medieval Village*, but which were never (I believe) pushed to their logical conclusion by any authoritative churchman.

relations and his bread-work were to a great extent under the lord's control; even in 1381, when only about half the population of England were bondfolk, and when the bondage itself had been very greatly softened, the natural cry of the rioters was: "Why should we then be kept under like beasts?"<sup>1</sup> Though, again, serfdom gradually died out in the more civilized parts of Europe, and perhaps only five or ten per cent. of the total population were bondfolk in 1500, yet even the free peasants were scarcely anywhere full citizens with a place in the constitution; the peasant was still only "an economic unit." And, in 1200, more than half the population of Europe was unfree; and an enormous proportion of these bondfolk belonged to the Church.

For this there was a double reason. In the darkest ages, when the peasant was so often compelled to "commend" himself to somebody, the most advantageous body was generally ecclesiastical. From the churchman he was more likely to get humane treatment, and the churchman was often more able to defend him; considerable numbers, therefore, came in by voluntary surrender; and of these, naturally, the large majority were women, whose brood would thus belong for ever to the Church. But such surrenders formed only a small fraction of the whole; at least nine-tenths of the bondfolk came in through the ordinary action of capitalism<sup>2</sup>. The serf was, by law, bound to the land; early Church councils prescribe that every parish parson shall have, for his endowment, a certain area of land with a certain number of serfs. The monasteries, in virtue of their superior order and regularity, kept up the Roman traditions of estate-management on a large scale more successfully than the majority of worldly nobles; they became, on the whole, the greatest and most beneficent squirearchy of the Dark Ages. By gifts from great folk and small, by advantageous purchases and exchanges, they amassed vast estates, and therefore multitudes of bondfolk. This is the common theme of the earlier pages in every monastic chartulary; "on such and such a date, so and so gave us (or, we bought) such and such lands with the serfs appurtenant."

<sup>1</sup> Froissart, Globe ed. p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> Vouchers for the statements in these pages may be found in *The Medieval Village*.

Let me quote two characteristic examples. When Count Burchard of Melun became a monk *ad succurrendum* at St-Maur, then (writes one of the brethren), "he bestowed upon us an infinite number of bondmen and bondwomen"<sup>1</sup>. Again, David I of Scotland, in a charter of about 1150, confirmed to Dunfermline certain ancient possessions and privileges, under prayer that whosoever infringed them might be blotted from the Book of Life and given over to everlasting damnation. One clause runs: "I grant to the abbot and monks that they may possess all the men, with all their moneys—*pecunia*—on whatsoever land they be, who were on those lands on the day whereon the said lands were offered and given to the abbey"<sup>2</sup>. The monks took these living economic units with as little compunction or afterthought as they took the territorial units. Even in the early thirteenth century, as Luchaire rightly says, "the 'social question' did not exist, in that it was not raised by anyone and did not affect public opinion"<sup>3</sup>. The local Roman church, from long before Gregory the Great, had possessed multitudes of slaves; there was no means anywhere of cultivating large estates except through the slave or his successor the serf; wherever Roman civilization was most continuous, the great estate and bond-labour were long prominent. And, the slave or serf being so definite a part of Church property, we meet with numerous synodal decrees, from a very early date onwards, against the alienation of these valuable economic items. The serf might often buy his freedom; but it was seldom given to him. It was on Church estates that bondage lasted longest; there were still probably about 300,000 in the France of 1789.

Another moral disadvantage of the great abbey estates was their enormous size. Cobbett's statement that "the monks could not become absentee landlords," though repeated even today by writers who ought to know better, is absurd upon the very face of it. Even among the smallest houses, scarcely any were within personal reach of all their farms, while the great houses had their lands scattered, not only over many counties or provinces, but even, in some cases, far beyond the seas or the mountains, among

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 143, col. 859, about 1000 A.D.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale-Caley, vol. vi, p. 1153.

<sup>3</sup> *Social Life, etc.* p. 381.

peasants of alien speech<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, as monks were among the greatest landlords of the Dark and Middle Ages, so also were they among the busiest. Where discipline was lax, we find frequent complaints in the fuller records of later days that the monk, nominally confined to his cloister, was, in fact, loafing about the streets or haunting the taverns; and a good many, like Chaucer's dignified "outrider" who "loved venerie," were rich and aristocratic enough to enjoy their taste for hunting. But, quite apart from these, a certain proportion of the brethren were necessarily wanderers abroad for the needs of the house, and thus became, incidentally, very complete men of the world. The necessity and the extent of such business journeys, when once this era of great estates had set in, is very well brought out by Miss Rose Graham in her analysis of the Cluniac system<sup>2</sup>. Hermannus, in his account of the foundation of the Premonstratensian Order, notes that the Religious, who had begun as labourers with their hands, soon became so implicated in worldly business that "we have oftentimes seen men, whom in earlier life we had known as peasants or paupers, riding about almost pompously in the habit of Religion"<sup>3</sup>. Petrus Cantor emphasizes the spiritual dangers of this movement. The Carthusians, he says, have kept their Order pure through their paucity of numbers and their seclusion from business cares. This shields them from envy, it shields them from lawsuits,

and it also excludes a sin which can scarcely be avoided in a monastery; to wit, when one is permitted to run about and wander abroad for the necessities of the house, wherein he oftentimes offends and is offended, and his sin redounds upon his fellows. When Achan sinned, the whole people was polluted with the curse.... Those who think to be excused from sin by the multitude [of those who do the like] or by [the example of] their superiors, are like unto Pilate washing his hands.... They are like also unto our first parents, who cast the blame upon God, even as these do upon the multitude and on their abbot; for "the woman (or the serpent) gave unto me, and I did eat"; so "the abbot prescribes this," or "the community does

<sup>1</sup> Mr H. W. Saunders has kindly allowed me to use here his map of possessions in the county of Norfolk held by the cathedral priory of Norwich.

<sup>2</sup> *Church Quarterly Review*, vol. 82 (1916), especially pp. 109-10. See also *Millénaire de Chury* (1910), vol. 1, p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> P.L. vol. 156, col. 996 b; cf. 994 a.



thus, and I do not withstand them." . . . They will not burn the less [in hell], but rather more, for burning together with many others<sup>1</sup>. And, to give an instructive example here, a certain man smitten with scruples of conscience, because he had been lord of many things whereunto he had brought no profit, possessing many churches and prebends, reaping where he had not sown, and eating and drinking where he laboured not, taking the milk and the wool and not caring for the sheep, but handing them over to hirelings<sup>2</sup>—this man, I say, shunned Scylla and fell into Charybdis. For he went into a monastery of canons regular, and found that this monastery had as many churches or prebends as it had inmates; and, since it was unlawful for him to go out from thence, he now mourns to have found in a community that very same state from which, as a private person, he had fled<sup>3</sup>.

His contemporary, Philippe 'de Harvengt, abbot of Bonne-Espérance, shows how, while many were thus abroad for business, others took the capitalist's licence of wandering abroad for pleasure:

Nowadays we see all men, far and wide, so indulgently licensed to ride on horseback that even monks are not restrained therefrom; nay, you will scarce find a monk of our days who can or will undertake the labour of a long journey on foot. Where is the road, the village, where is the crowded thoroughfare, in which one does not see the monk on horseback? Who is now able to leave his house without stumbling upon a monk? Is there a feast, a fair, or a market-place where monks do not appear? They are to be seen in all assemblies, in all battles, in all tourneys. Monks swarm everywhere that knights assemble for battle. What do they in the midst of the shock of bucklers and the crash of furious lances, and wherefore are they authorized to go out thus and ride about?<sup>4</sup>

Yet in Philippe's time the monks had already begun, what became their frequent practice in process of time, to commit their more distant lands to stewards, or simply to farm them out to middlemen.

<sup>1</sup> There is a very interesting disquisition on the extent to which canon law may make allowance for the multitude of offenders in Gratian's *Decretum*, pars I, dist. xlv, c. 1: see especially the gloss on this canon.

<sup>2</sup> "Mercenariis annis tradebat"; the sense seems to require *ovcs*.

<sup>3</sup> P.L. vol. 205, coll. 216 ff. and 537; cf. 536. I have chosen the second and more detailed form in which Peter tells this anecdote. See again Giraldus Cambrensis, R.S. vol. IV, p. 199, for the moral danger of these minglings with the outside world.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by A. Luchaire, *Social France at the time of Philip Augustus*, 1912, p. 180.

A generation after Philippe de Harvengt, St Antony of Padua says the same: "Nowadays there are no fairs, no worldly courts are held, no Church courts, in which monks and Religious are not to be found"; they are in constant litigation, and drag kinsfolk and friends into the lawcourts to support contentions about trifles<sup>1</sup>. A century later, the monk who compiled the *Zwetl* chartulary shows us the business difficulties which came in when once monk and lay brother had settled down into a capitalist system<sup>2</sup>. Soon afterwards, the author of *Piers Plowman* is bitterly eloquent.

Ac now is Religioun a ryder, a rowmer bi stretes,  
 A leder of love-dayes and a londe-buyer,  
 A priker on a palfray fro manere to manere,  
 An heep of houndes at his ers, as he a lorde were;  
 And, but if his knave knele that shal his cuppe brynge,  
 He loureth on hym and axeth hym who taughte hym curteisye....  
 In many places there hij persones ben, ben himself at ese,  
 Of the pore have thei no pité, and that is her charité;  
 Ac thei leten hem as lordes, her londe lith so brode<sup>3</sup>.

The monk, who had long ceased to work with his hands, was now a member of the titled classes<sup>4</sup>; and the titled classes, though often more familiar in their manners than at the present day, were in truth divided by a far greater gulf from the artisan or the tiller of the soil. Yet neither this satire nor Chaucer's goes beyond the facts; great responsible prelates saw all this with no less concern than the irresponsible poets; complaints thicken as we near the Reformation. Archbishop Pecham was keenly alive to the moral dangers involved in this "outriding" of officials as a general practice<sup>5</sup>. In the special case of his own Canterbury monks, recognizing the danger of these business journeys, he supported the prior in his policy of taking the management of the manors out of the hands of monastic officials and giving them over to "faithful bailiffs." The result

<sup>1</sup> *Opera* (P.L. vol. 203), p. 145; cf. p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> *Zwetl*, p. 541, about 1311 A.D. Ch. de Lasteyrie, in his study of the abbey of St-Martial-de-Limoges, emphasizes "the secular life which the cellarers are obliged to lead" as men of business (*Éc. des Chartes, Positions des thèses*, 1899, p. 56; so also at St-Martin-des-Champs, *ibid.* p. 21). Even abbesses had thus to go abroad (Peetz, p. 212).

<sup>3</sup> B. x, 306.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter IV here below.

<sup>5</sup> *Epp.* R.S. p. 89 (1280 A.D.).

was a rebellion among the monks, some of whom went to Rome on appeal to the Pope; the reforming prior finally resigned<sup>1</sup>. Already, therefore, and for centuries past, the world had seen, in practice, a glaring contrast between the actual monk of daily life and the model monk of St Jerome, who can live only in his cloister and dies outside, like a fish out of water; or again the ideal cloisterer of St Peter Damian, who would have had his fellows regard themselves as sheep snatched from the wolf's jaws, and as God's fishes swimming safely in God's stewpond<sup>2</sup>. The gulf (to pursue this subject to the end) only widened with time, in spite of fitful struggles for reform. The Olivetans were an Order of reformed Benedictines even less numerous than the Carthusians. They, like the Carthusians, were able to maintain a great deal of their early purity through their separation from the world. Their General Chapter, in 1430, decreed that even the Abbot-General, in order to

remove all occasion of wandering abroad, [and] for the edification and good example of the aforesaid brethren, should remain continually within the monastery of Monte Oliveto, nor ever pass beyond the bounds of the monastery aforesaid, which we set at eight miles. Yet we decree that, for any manifest utility or necessity of the Order, and by consent and will of the aforesaid visitors or of the greater part thereof, he may go forth, always accompanied by two of them, and, by their counsel and consent, visit and do those things which concern the manifest utility of the Order<sup>3</sup>.

But such strict adherence to chapter 66 of the Rule was very exceptional, even if it lasted among the Montolivetans themselves. We may see how much of the monastic official's life was spent outside the cloister from such chance notices as may be found in *Norfolk Archaeology*, vol. VII (1872), p. 159. Again, the actual journal of a monastic "outrider" is summarized in a valuable little book by Mr H. F. Westlake<sup>4</sup>. Even for the ordinary monastic rank and file, wandering had become so common that the General Chapter of the English Benedictines, in 1444, actually treated it as a very serious penalty to impose

<sup>1</sup> *Epp.* R.S. pp. 546, 628; introd. vol. III, p. xliii. Compare the way in which even Abbot Samson was persuaded to ignore the evil moral repute of his monk Geoffrey Redhead, in consideration of the man's great value as a business agent in the manors (Jocelin of Brakelond, tr. Clarke, ch. xv).

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 145, coll. 765-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Chron. M.O.* p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> *Last Days*, pp. 44 ff.



a temporary conformity with this chapter of the Rule; the monk who has said to his brother-monk "Thou liest!" is to be "gated" for three weeks; he who has deliberately struck his brother with fist or knife is not to be allowed outside for a whole year<sup>1</sup>.

This is among the facts which help us most to understand the Dissolution; but we must return to the monks of 1200 A.D., to whom the Rule was still something more of a reality than this. They had the strength and the weakness of feudalism and capitalism<sup>2</sup>; indeed, they would almost have been more than human if they had resisted the forces which were daily tending to feudalize and capitalize them. Nothing could have saved them but the strictest adherence to the Rule of St Benedict, both in the letter and in the spirit. In my first volume I noted the occasional reactions towards original simplicity and poverty. St Benedict of Aniane, working under that revival of culture which we connect with the name of Charles the Great, is recorded to have freed all serfs on the lands given to his monastery. Again, it was one of the maxims of the early Cistercians that the Order should keep its hands clean from this social evil, as also from the appropriation of parochial tithes. But the rising tide of Cistercian prosperity soon swept these safeguards away; and, by the end of the twelfth century, this new Order was more definitely identified than any other with the growing capitalistic system.

The old problem, therefore, was again acute at the dawn of the thirteenth century. The one thing that could have kept the monk in steady sympathy with the worker, and in steady protest against all that was snobbish and selfish in the feudal system, was a sincere return to the Benedictine and Augustinian ideal of personal labour<sup>3</sup>. These vast and carefully-organized communities, with the spiritual and social influence which their institution commanded wherever it was not too patently false to its ideal, might have regenerated European society. In the

<sup>1</sup> Reynerus, p. 132. The Chapter Acts are full of similar evidence; e.g. in 1343 the English Benedictines already treat this wandering as a common practice. I deal more fully with the subject in my third volume.

<sup>2</sup> I use this term *capitalism* advisedly: see Prof. H. Pirenne's paper, unforgettable by those who heard it and the discussion which followed it, at the International Historical Conference of 1913. Farther evidence for the statements on this page may be found in Appendix 3.

<sup>3</sup> See below, Chapter IV of this volume.

later Middle Ages, we find that the serf had often struggled into the position of a free labourer or yeoman farmer; but this was mainly by his own unaided efforts, taking advantage of every small stroke of luck that came in his way. If this upward movement had been supported, deliberately and consistently, by ecclesiastical landlordism, then the advance would have come centuries earlier, and the peasant would have reached an even better, because less contentious and precarious, position. But it was essential to such a happy state of things that the monks themselves should work, if only to the extent of sharing wind and weather with the bondman in the fields, and lending him an occasional hand. This, again, could never have been done on a gigantic scale, unless the success of such a movement had given a gigantic impulse to monastic recruiting. A community numbering from a dozen to a hundred people—and there were few monasteries even on the Continent, perhaps none in England, which boasted a hundred resident monks in 1200—could not possibly thus exploit a large number of farms scattered, perhaps, over a dozen counties<sup>1</sup>. On a far smaller scale, it is true, the labourer might have been kept to his work by daily companionship and example; but, on the actual scale of monastic capitalism which meets us in history, compulsion was obviously necessary in a more or less direct form; so that the monk would be known on most of his estates, if at all, only as a rather distant overseer, bound himself under all sorts of restrictions imposed by the great financial machine behind him. No doubt it would have been extremely difficult to retain the original Benedictine spirit in an institution which, mainly through its own virtues, had so far outgrown anything that St Benedict ever foresaw. Therefore we cannot complain of the average monk for being a man of his own time; but, when we look from the individual to the mass, we shall miss the whole lesson of history if we fail to recognize what I have already emphasized—that the institution itself shared the weaknesses, together with the strength, both of age-long feudalism and of nascent capitalism. The peasant trudged to and from his work past great walls which, even where they were not flanked with towers and loopholed

<sup>1</sup> The great abbey of Bury had possessions in more than 250 different towns or villages; see the list in Dugdale-Caley, vol. III, p. 120.

for archery, reminded him that the inmates were protected not only by God's grace but by human force. The great church and its steeple dominated the whole landscape; under that church, as the villager well knew, very few monks were content with anything like his own sparing fare, while others were able to entertain the baron, or even the king, on equal terms. The cellarer or the granger, when they came into the fields, looked down from their palfreys upon the labourers; and their friendliest talk was, frankly and necessarily, condescending; the bailiff, again, so rigorous to his inferiors, was on his best manners before the monastic official. The doles and broken meats distributed at the almonry were, as everybody knew, produced not by the monk's but by the peasant's toil; and often they amounted to far less than the tithes which the monks drew, in that very parish, from the peasant's own sheaves. Or again, if the monastery were too far distant for its actual walls to be seen, still there came this occasional monastic "outrider" to collect his dues or to screw up the labourer to his work; while often in the fifteenth century, worse still, the monk was scarcely seen at all, but known mainly as an absentee landlord who had farmed out the estates to some speculating middleman<sup>1</sup>. The best men of those days were fully alive to the paradox which lurks under the endowment of holy poverty. A monk of Prüm wrote: "Faith brought us this wealth; but the daughter has devoured the mother"<sup>2</sup>. And the Cistercian novice-master, Caesarius of Heisterbach:

Religion, as men are wont to say, brought forth riches, and riches have destroyed religion. Consider the ancient monasteries of the Order of St Benedict; on account of the exceeding religion that was therein, kings gave them an infinite number of farms; nay, even princedoms with their castles and cities and feudal vassals; whereby, in process of time, that same religion has been so destroyed that those Religious who in their time of poverty were far more religious than the rest are now, in certain places, more worldly even than the men of this world. Mark those royal abbeys—Fulda and Werden and Prüm and very many others—how religion flourishes in them today! there, where of old were multitudes of monks, we find now very few, and these few lack the necessities of life. Not long since, one of our lay brethren was walking through the abbey church of

<sup>1</sup> For instances of this see Archbold, p. 326, and W. J. Corbett in *Social England*, 1902, vol. II, p. 739.

<sup>2</sup> v. Eicken, *Mitt. Weltanschauung*, 1887, p. 743.

St Boniface at Fulda, and a monk of the house, who was showing the relics among their treasures, and the divers choirs [of the building,] said: "Behold, brother! once there was here such a multitude of monks that the choirs followed one upon another, and that no time of day or night lacked the praise of God: nowadays we are scarce eighteen here, and we lack bread to eat; and deservedly so. When the monks were humble, and (as their name implies) penitent in deed as well as in habit, then they had rich revenues; for, from the time that they began to be royal folk, it is right that they should have courtly fare." Wherefore a certain citizen of Cologne spake concerning the monks of that city a word not less memorable than it was merry. For he said: "When the monks of Sankt Martin had wide-shaven and glorious crowns, rich and great dishes were set before them; now that their tonsure is shrunken, by God's just doom their customary portions of fish are shrunken also." From all this we see how discipline begets abundance, and abundance, unless we take the utmost care, destroys discipline; and discipline in its fall pulls down abundance. Riches are like moths: moths eat garments, these are then destroyed, and the moths perish with them<sup>1</sup>.

There was as much room in those days for a reformer like St Francis as there has been in any generation of Christendom.

<sup>1</sup> *Caes. Hom.* pars III, p. 96. Compare St Hildegard, a generation earlier, concerning the commercial prosperity of many monks: "These men wish to possess heaven and earth at the same time, which cannot be" (P.L. vol. 197, c. 2 to 5).

## CHAPTER II

### MONASTIC CAPITALISM

IN the preceding chapter, I have tried to show by a few examples how strongly the monk, like other men, was coloured by his environment, and how that environment was progressing towards capitalism—which, for the Benedictine ideal, meant decay. The subject is so important, that I must continue it in this second chapter, and quote other witnesses, both medieval and modern.

The turn of the twelfth century had brought fresh life into the cloister; another springtide was to come with the turn of the thirteenth; between them came a winter of monastic discontent; the winter which creeps in due course over the very greatest movements, when the first flame has died down, and the heights of heaven are plainly not yet won, and the old garment begins to show threadbare, and no man yet sees how the new cloth is to be woven. There is a sense in which every human achievement stultifies itself; nativity crawls to maturity and, in its very ripeness, is already half in decay; “so weit im Leben ist zu nah zum Tod.” The papacy of Innocent III was in one sense the greatest of medieval achievements; in another, the greatest of medieval failures; impossible in its very conception, it developed still more fatal impossibilities after his death<sup>1</sup>. Half a century earlier, monasticism had gone through a similar phase; it had won a crowning victory, and had then discovered, what Newman was destined to rediscover for himself, that we need almost the same consolation after struggling and succeeding as after struggling and failing. Nor need any man resent this who is not altogether impatient of human limitations. “Plus nobis Thomae infidelitas ad fidem, quam fides credentium discipulorum profuit”; to face past failures, and take their exact measure, will discourage only the pusillanimous; for others, it

<sup>1</sup> See A. L. Smith, *Church and State in the Middle Ages*, pp. 6, 133, 181, 192, 210, 244.

rather proclaims the unconquerable human soul: "as dying, and behold we live"; "that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." If society was not altogether satisfied with the monks of 1200 A.D., no doubt this was partly because it compared them with the lofty ideal of their Rule, but partly also because it foreboded, however vaguely and unconsciously, greater possibilities towards which Religion must advance<sup>1</sup>.

The fact that society had very serious reasons for criticizing the monk as a capitalist, even as early as 1200 A.D., is recognized by modern writers of all schools who study the original documents at first-hand. Abbé Auguste Pétel, who will not be suspected of exaggeration, writes:

Even among Religious, a neighbour was almost always a rival. As we have had more than one occasion to point out, the vow of poverty bound the individual alone; it was scarcely more than a fiction for the community. If it bound each Religious to detachment from worldly goods, that obligation did not extend to the community. Thus the convents were not only rich; they watched also, with jealous care, over the conservation of their wealth; they even sought to increase it at their neighbours' expense when reciprocal rights were reduced to uncertainty by the lack of authentic and precise documents. Hence those discords and incessant quarrels, those continual lawsuits, which have taken up so much room in their chartularies that scarce any space is left for pious works. Yet, though in general these conflicts are very unedifying, they had a *raison d'être* and became plausible when the monasteries, acting as lords, had to defend or to vindicate the rights of their subjects even more than their own<sup>2</sup>.

The conclusion to which Abbé Pétel's researches have led him was even more evident to contemporaries. It cannot seriously be denied that the society of 1200 A.D. was critical of contemporary monasticism. M. Sabatier's third chapter ("L'Église vers 1209") has often been taxed with exaggeration; but never, I think, by any student who is seriously prepared with counter-evidence from original sources. His evidence need not be repeated here;

<sup>1</sup> Here, as elsewhere, I do as medieval writers often did, and include canons regular (Augustinians, Premonstratensians, etc.) under the generic term of *monks*, except where the context demands a distinction. See the quotation from Hostiensis in Appendix 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Aube*, vol. 70 (1906), p. 254. The author is dealing with a quarrel between the Templars of Serre and the Benedictines of Molesme about 1210 A.D.

it will be better if I approach pre-Franciscan history from a slightly different angle.

The author of *The Ancren Riwele*, writing probably in the first half of the twelfth century, anticipates criticism for his young community, and is ready with a biblical defence.

If any ignorant person ask you of what Order you are, as you tell me some do, who strain at the gnat and swallow the fly [*sic*], answer and say that ye are of the Order of Saint James, who was God's Apostle, and for his great holiness was called God's brother. If such answer seems to him strange and singular, ask him, "What is Order, and where he may find in holy writ religion more plainly described and manifested than in the canonical epistle of St James?" He saith what religion is, and what right Order: that is "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." . . . Wherever these things are, there is true religion, and there is right Order; and to do all the other things and leave this undone is mere trickery and deceit. (C.S. p. 9.)

This was, in effect, an appeal from words to facts; from human institutions, even the most respectable, to Christ's own test, "by their fruits ye shall know them"; and medieval society in general, though it knew little at first-hand either of Christ's word or of James, was ready of its own accord to apply this common-sense test to the Religious of its own day. It willingly granted spiritual superiority, so far as this was not too inconsistent with observed facts. The question whether the monk enclosed himself primarily to serve God or to save his own soul was, in the most real cases of vocation, almost as insoluble as the question whether the hen or the egg came first; in worshipping truly he was saved, and he could not be saved without true worship. Therefore, so long as the monk by his claustration seemed to be serving God, so long did the people covet his prayers, load him with gifts, and look upon him as a natural steward for the poor. In no century since the Dark Ages did these gifts flow so freely as between 1050 and 1150<sup>1</sup>. But, in

<sup>1</sup> This is brought out by the editors of all monastic chartularies. Yet, with all this diminution, endowments still came in pretty freely till about 1250; thenceforward the decrease is rapid; by about 1350, as the historian of La Cava puts it: "la période des oblations et des donations est à peu près finie" (p. 193). Not, of course, that gifts had entirely ceased even at the Dissolution.

the next generation, men realized that this rapid increase in number of Orders and wealth of inmates had not brought corresponding spiritual and material benefits: "*Multiplicasti gentem et non magnificasti laetitiam.*" The social question was destined soon to come into practical politics. Peasants and operatives were already improving their position; the merchant's toe already came near to the heel of the noble, impoverished by personal extravagance, subdivision of inheritances, and the Crusades. In the schools, free thought was spreading under the surface; the established religion was seriously questioned; and we cannot touch an established religion without touching the social constitution in which it has grown up. Not that the actual division between rich and poor was increasing so much as the sense of division. The poor had certainly been worse off in the Dark Ages, but they had suffered inarticulately and, to that extent at least, less consciously. By 1200 A.D. they had gained enough to be eager for more, and to criticize existing institutions. Of those, monasticism was one of the greatest and most obvious, and monasticism now spelt capitalism. It was the most benevolent of contemporary capitalistic forces; but capitalistic it was, unmistakably and even undisguisedly. St Francis, therefore, judged the old Orders by St James's test; he found them wanting, and struck out a new path: that is why he found such an immense following in a world which had long felt the void, and only lacked the leader. A man's religion (let us again remember) is surely revealed in the long run by his attitude towards his neighbour. This is the test which the world of 1200 more or less consciously applied; in this light, above all others, we must consider monasticism during those generations which were forgetting St Bernard and which knew nothing, as yet, of the friars. Did the monastic capitalist stand above reasonable criticism; or, on the other hand, was it precisely the most reasonable and disinterested contemporaries who felt the most serious misgivings?

It will be best to begin with two textual quotations (the most favourable that I know, and one of the least favourable) from two contemporaries so great that we can scarcely expect to find more unexceptionable witnesses. The first is St Bernard's friend Peter the Venerable, one of the greatest of all the abbots of



In all this letter Peter is publicly pleading his own cause and that of his fellows. I have already had occasion to point out how definitely his more private writings, addressed to his own monks, convict this letter of exaggerations in his and in their favour<sup>1</sup>; and we shall see farther evidence on this point in a later chapter. But we cannot suspect him of worse than natural exaggeration; and this we must check by contemporary evidence<sup>2</sup>.

Almost at the same moment that Peter the Venerable thus defended the Cluniacs against Cistercian criticism, Peter Abailard was preaching to his fellow-monks the sermon which stands thirty-first in his collected works, "On St John Baptist"<sup>3</sup>. I had occasion to quote a good deal of this in my first volume, but it must be given more fully here. St John (Abailard says) was like the wild ass of Job xxxix, 5, making his home far from the throng of men, and ranging in solitary freedom over vast tracts of the spiritual world.

Behold! in this foregoing description of the wild ass we are plainly told what we ought to follow; but we see no less clearly how contrary is the way which we tread. For, now that the fervour of religion grows cold—nay, is already quenched—whereas we ought to live by our own labour (the one thing which, according to St Benedict, makes true monks<sup>4</sup>), we follow idleness, that enemy of the soul, and seek our livelihood from other men's labour; thus enjoying the perverse liberty of this harmful repose, and spending our time both in luxury and in garrulity, we have lost the true liberty of this wild ass. Hence comes it that, entangling ourselves in worldly cares, and striving, under domination of the covetousness of worldly things, to become richer in the monastery than we had been in the world, we have subjected ourselves rather to earthly lords than to God. We take from the mighty of this world, in the guise of alms, manors and peasants, bondmen and bondwomen; we bend our necks to the heavy yoke of these [great] folk, and sometimes pay dearly for little that we receive. For they, considering that these things come rather

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 282; as to the Cluniacs of a later generation, we find those of Romainmotier selling many serfs to a lay lord in 1282 (*Med. Village*, p. 147, where I give other examples). Either, therefore, the clear distinction asserted by Peter had ceased to exist, or the monks cruelly ignored it for the sake of a little gain.

<sup>2</sup> R. Houdayer, in *Millénaire de Cluny*, comes to a generally favourable conclusion as to the Cluniac treatment of tenants (vol. I, pp. 237 ff.).

<sup>3</sup> Ed. Cousin, t. I, p. 572: I have already printed part of this in vol. I, p. 266.

<sup>4</sup> *Rule*, ch. 48.

from their own possessions than from ours, give us no thanks [for what we render], holding that we are not so much giving as restoring. Often, again, we are dragged by compulsion into worldly courts; and, pleading our cause publicly before secular judges, do we not<sup>1</sup> so shamelessly contend that we compel our men not only to take oaths but even to fight wagers of battle for us, to the utmost peril of their lives? St Paul reproves this even in secular Christians, saying (1 Cor. vi, 7-9), "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?"... Who, again, knoweth not that we lay heavier exactions on our subjects, and rage with greater tyranny than the great folk of this world?—*majori debacchari tyrannide quam saeculares potestates*. Finally, we break forth into such madness, that, if we can, we get our livelihood from tributes and taxes and tolls, though it be reckoned among the great miracles of our Lord that He was able to draw Matthew away from his vocation of tax-gatherer. Next, to turn from secular to ecclesiastical powers, our ambition seems to sustain no less vexation from this quarter. For, seeing that we usurp the things which pertain to the clergy, and get from the bishops, by hook or by crook—*quocumque modo*—the revenue of parishes in the form of tithes or offerings, we are often compelled to pay things which we have not robbed. Hence we are often summoned to councils and synods; and, going daily to the public courts, we have to pay no small price for the hire of judges<sup>2</sup>, or for advocates to cloke our injustices. Certainly the frequent complaints in councils testify to the rapacity of our avarice. Seldom do we see bishops contending there, seldom clergy; almost all the controversies are either those of monks or those arising from monks.

He goes on to speak of traffic in monastic offices, conventual moneys wasted on relations, familiarities with worldly folk, and consequent implication in worldly selfishness. There are those who encourage sinners in their sins,

flattering with soft speech the life of worldly folk, whom we should rather correct with bitter rebuke, and draw to penitence through horror of divine judgement and the pains of hell. When we have

<sup>1</sup> *Adeo non impudenter contendimus*. Cousin suggests omitting the *non*, but *nonne* would seem a much simpler emendation. A few lines higher up, there seems something wrong with *postmodum*, but the general sense is plain.

<sup>2</sup> Surviving monastic accounts, like those of lay folk, often record the sums paid to judges for a favourable verdict.

taken these men's gifts, encouraging them with the suffrage of our prayers, we leave them the more careless in their iniquities; for they do not believe themselves to have wrongly gotten, or wrongly to possess, things from which they see Religious beg for alms; by receiving which we have frequent communion with the mammon of unrighteousness... For we do not make friends of the true poor by our gifts, who love even their enemies, but rather those of whom I have spoken, [who have gained money unjustly], and in the manner which I have described... Who knoweth not, again, how our Religion is cheapened even in the eyes of these [rich folk] at whose bidding we do not refuse to come, not only accepting their gifts but also mingling with their disorderly tables and families; which we ought to avoid, if not for God's reverence, at least to escape injury to our own good name... Not to speak of the records of saints, let even the examples of heathen philosophers repress the impudence of our greed... If sometimes we give something under show of alms, it is for the purpose of receiving more, as though we set a little bait on a hook to catch a great fish; nor do we bestow benefits or show charity so much to others as to ourselves, if indeed the words *benefit* and *charity* can be used in such cases.

And finally (p. 591):

For what more insatiable and exacting importunity is there than the monastic belly—*venter monachorum*—or rather the belly of epicurean pigs? to whom we may apply those verses of Horace: "You will see me too, plump in flesh and sleek of skin, when you wish to mock at a pig from Epicurus's sty." All these lean worldly fishes, when they are brought into the stewpond of the cloister, soon become so fat and ample of girth that, if you come to see them a short while after, you will scarce know them again. Bring a few monks among a thousand laymen; you will find among those few more plump folk, more sleek, more intoxicated with excess of heat, and more that are bald.

With this rhetorical climax the sermon ends.

We must always discount the words of an indignant preacher in the Middle Ages; and the accomplished rhetorician Abailard's evidence must be examined at least as critically as that of Peter the Venerable. Their discrepancies may be partly explained by the fact that Peter is speaking for what was still in St Bernard's time a select congregation, that of Cluny; while Abailard is probably referring mainly to his own personal experiences at the great royal abbey of St-Denis (where the motto might naturally be *Surtout pas trop de zèle*) and at St-Gildas-de-Ruys

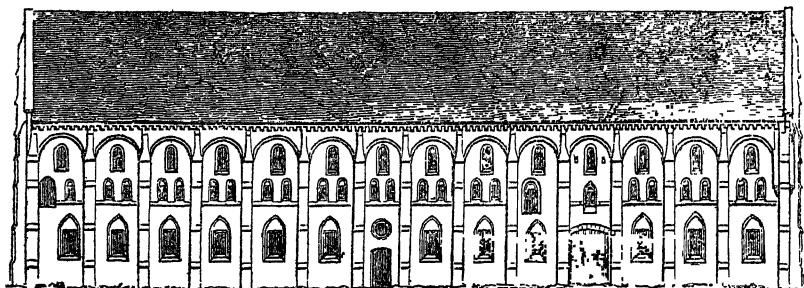
among the backward folk of Brittany. Still more, I think, must be set down to the difference of auditors; Peter is defending himself from the criticism of rivals; Abailard speaks in domestic confidence and *abandon*. Peter's, again, was a naturally conservative mind; and Abailard was a radical. Yet these considerations might still leave us in very great doubt between the two witnesses, if we had no other documents to help us. Fortunately, however, we have many such; and their general witness is strongly on Abailard's side. To begin with, Peter of Cluny's plea is belied by later Cluniac facts, and we find the General Chapter of that Order not only approving the sale of serfs from these (*ex hypothesi*) paternally kind monastic owners to those (*ex hypothesi*) cruel lay lords, but also solemnly forbidding the enfranchisement of "these bondmen whom Christ redeemed at the price of His own blood"<sup>1</sup>. And, again, other unexceptionable witnesses, coming soon after Peter and Abailard, agree very definitely with the latter. Let me quote two here, not as saying anything which their contemporaries did not imply, but as writers whose deep concern for the fortunes of their Church prompted them to write more fully than others. Petrus Cantor—Peter the Precentor of Notre-Dame-de-Paris—was one of the saintliest and most scholarly teachers in the whole history of the University of Paris; younger contemporaries, like Cardinal Jacques de Vitry and Thomas of Cantimpré, speak of him with unbounded admiration. He refused successively the bishoprics of Tournai and Paris, and ended his days as a Cistercian monk at Longpont in 1197. His *Verbum Abbreviatum* is a work equally remarkable for learning and for sober common-sense; it would be difficult to find anywhere in the Middle Ages any better discussion of the injustices contingent upon trials by ordeal, of the death-penalty for heretics, and of the morality of oaths<sup>2</sup>. He recurs very frequently, in all his discussions, to the subject of contemporary monasticism.

The monks, he thinks, are enjoying revenues disproportionate to their social services. They have gold and silver plate in their

<sup>1</sup> See *The Medieval Village*, p. 147.

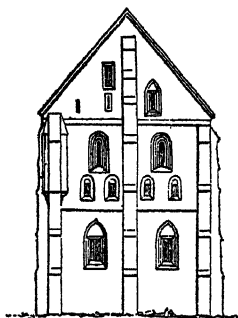
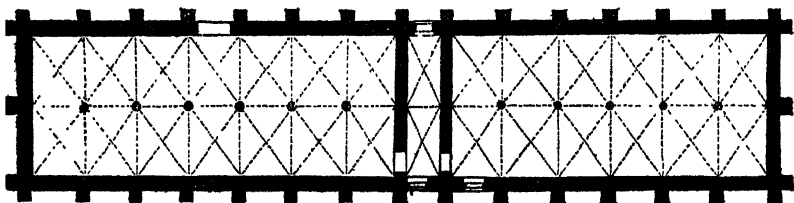
<sup>2</sup> On the first of these subjects, he was destined to be brilliantly justified in a few years by Innocent III; on the other two, the medieval Church went steadily backwards. My references to Peter's book are from Migne, P.L. vol. 205.

churches<sup>1</sup>; the buildings themselves, in their magnificence, are sometimes raised from ill-gotten gains; Christ may be sold more shamelessly by modern Christians than He was by Judas. "The

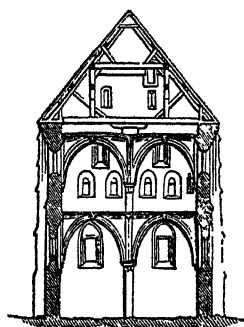


M XX X

AB ERY



Elevation



Section

Cistercian abbey barn of Vauclair, 230 ft. long and 75 ft. high  
(early thirteenth century)

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 205, col. 74; the other references are to coll. 101-2, 145-6, 210, 366-8, 321, 130-1, 370, 184, 216-17, 235, 536, 137-40, 134, 217-18; cf. 402 c, 536-7, 549-50. In nearly all of these passages the monks are explicitly criticized; in others, implicitly in common with the secular clergy.

monks of our day take gifts indiscriminately [however illicitly acquired], abusing that apostolic authority, 'asking no question for conscience' sake.'" They take money on the plea of religion or poverty; they give of this money to their kinsfolk; "many monks, taking pity on their parents, lose their own souls." The prohibitions of the Rule against possession of private property are commonly and openly violated; the monks who thus play fast and loose with their vow will lose the kingdom of Heaven. In other ways their traditions hinder their progress; the length of prescribed services sometimes tempts to indevotion; they buy themselves into monasteries, buy and sell dependent cells; it is an abuse that monks should be able to claim ordination without examination; it would have been better if these great communities had remained small groups of anchorites or semi-anchorites like the Carthusians; the Gospel rule is choked by the multitude of traditions. Their frequent exemption from episcopal control is disastrous; this is one of the three main ecclesiastical abuses which St Bernard would have abolished if he had sat for three years on the papal throne; another was the wandering of monks outside their monasteries. The pope permits these things; we must believe that God does not permit him to err; yet "we must fear lest these exemptions and particular divisions will cause such a universal separation from the spiritual rule of Rome as has already come partly to pass from the worldly rule of Rome"; those who support this system of exemptions "seem not to maintain the holiness or purity of the door [into God's fold], but to bring in particular schisms, which, uniting together, shall form that universal schism and separation from the Roman Church."

Such is the danger; yet how can it be avoided under the ordinary monastic system? For this seems necessarily to involve these many temptations which wealth always offers to the spoiler; and that litigation by which alone it can be defended; and the sin of wandering abroad<sup>1</sup>.

Peter, then, saw clearly that the real spiritual weakness of monasticism at this time of material prosperity was its inherently capitalistic character; by implication, he requires a

<sup>1</sup> Here come the words which I have quoted more fully towards the end of Chapter I.

return to evangelical poverty. William of Auvergne, who wrote among the beginnings of the new movement, saw this still more clearly and appealed quite explicitly to the new example of the Franciscans. He, like Peter, was one of the greatest teachers of his century at Paris, and one of the busiest champions of orthodoxy against the solvent forces of the new Aristotle, with its translations and commentaries from the Arabic. As bishop of Paris, he had frequently to grapple with difficult problems in monastic visitation; he was one of the principal councillors of the king, and enjoyed the special esteem of Pope Gregory IX. He was pretty certainly older than St Francis, perhaps ten years older; and, though the passage which I am about to quote may have been written after the saint's death, yet in its characterization of the older Orders it embodies things which William must have had opportunities of noting from his youth upwards. In his treatise *De moribus* he comes to the subject of poverty<sup>1</sup>; and thence to warn his readers against those who

profess poverty in word and in dress, while they are literally among the very rich.... For men who inherit a realm of great wealth and renown cannot truly claim to be poor on the plea that their possession is indivisible; for, even though they be forbidden to sell or abstract any part of it at their own will, yet the prohibition and limitation of waste is no diminution of their wealth, nor does it even infringe their possession.... Kings themselves, who are held as richest among men, are prohibited by oath, and sometimes by open violent resistance, from wasting or ill-spending their treasures and the other possessions of their realm; are they themselves the less rich for that? or is their wealth the less? Thus the brethren of a convent possess all their goods indivisibly, on condition that they may sell nothing, nor alienate, nor even take from thence of their own will, for this would be ill-expense and waste. Again, they themselves confess that the community possesses; but the community is nothing else than the brethren; therefore the brethren who possess all this wealth are rich; how then can they be poor? Again, if each of them be poor, and the community rich, this is as if we said that each part is white, yet the whole body is black. Or, again, to take the contrary case, it is plainly impossible that each separate member should be rich, yet the community poor.... If two or three entirely worldly folk, or living under no monastic rule—*seculariter viventes*—contributed all their possessions to some steward, and allowed him to minister to each as he needed, either separately when required,

<sup>1</sup> *Opera*, Rouen, 1674, vol. 1, pp. 233 ff.

or collectively, then these men would not have abdicated their wealth, but only the burden and the cares of wealth, [as Potiphar and Pharaoh did, Genesis xxxix and xli].... Therefore men of Religion are not poor, or less rich, because they have not, or will not have the burden and cares of wealth, so long as the wealth itself remains with them; for, unless they have abandoned wealth, they have not become poor.... Each of the brethren has a right at law of demanding his portion if it be denied him; and law would enable the bishop of the diocese to force restitution upon the abbot who should refuse him his *portio congrua*, and the monk would be heard anywhere as one who had a good case. From this it seems plain that he does possess in this matter such a portion of worldly goods; for how should the law adjudge it to him as plaintiff if he had no legal right in it?... Therefore all Religious of this kind are on this account rich, and truly rich, under that name and dress of poverty.

The only Religious who are really poor, are those who are allowed to claim nothing for their own, not even to claim in so many words—*determinate*—a frock or a tunic. Here, of course, William is at one with the stricter exponents of the Benedictine Rule; and the goal which he indicates is practically that of reasonable Franciscanism; that each brother should have only the usufruct of anything, and that this usufruct itself should be restricted by a severe denial of mere superfluities. Yet, as a matter of present fact,

innumerable Religious<sup>1</sup> wear the cowl as [the clerical habit is worn by] those dissolute clerics who are called *Goliardi*; and their filthiness is the greater in proportion as they have the more liberal supply of worldly goods to feed their lusts. Others, again, are cast by their parents or kinsfolk into the cloister like whelps or piglings which their dams cannot rear<sup>2</sup>; so that they die unto the world not spiritually but (so to speak) civilly, being deprived of their hereditary portion which devolves upon those who remain in the world; and, as for this, such casting-away, or drowning, or the intention thereof, is simony. Likewise also, they who enter for the sake of their bodily livelihood, not having whereby they may otherwise live, enter not into Religion but into Eating, so to speak;... to such we may apply with likelihood that vulgar French saying, that they never had their feet in Religion... they are oxen tied to the crib.... Monks of this kind we are wont to call Kitcheners and Refectorars; because in

<sup>1</sup> *Religiones* here seems a misreading for *religiosi*; if, however, we read the text as it stands, it gives even wider application to William's criticisms.

<sup>2</sup> For the literal justification of these words, see Berlière, *Recrutement*, from which I quote later in Chapter iv.



heart and intention they make their [first] profession [of obedience] to kitchen and refectory and cellar, whatever else they may do. Those who either enter or are thrust in in order that they may be rich and may enrich their kinsfolk (to wit, that they may there get priories and provostships and other offices of authority), enter in as thieves and robbers; such folk often hide under the dress of servants and even of monks, and enter for theft's sake, making the very cowl into a lurking-place, that they may steal worldly goods, withdrawing them from pious uses, and turn them into evil money. They are like unto foxes, pretending themselves to be spiritually dead by their dress and their tonsure, in order that they may prey thus. But, whereas they or their servants alienate and sell such conventual goods, they do this not as owners but as guardians and stewards.... And, as the common proverb asks, "What drives the wolf from the forest?" and answers, "Hunger"<sup>1</sup>, that is, want of food, thus doth poverty compel the Wolf of Hell to go forth from the poor, so that very many folk are found free and immune from the infernal wolves and lions, while very many rich folk are possessed thereby.... And, even as perfectly bare bones are not haunted by birds or beasts, but altogether deserted, so are poor folk not cared for by worldly men, as we have already shown from Proverbs xix, 7. "All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him?"

Yet William makes the Lady Poverty plead her own cause with elaborate prosopopoeia and rhetoric, as a person far nearer to God, and more truly blessed, than Wealth. The whole chapter is a striking anticipation—for it must have been written many years before—of the now famous *Sacrum Commercium B. Francisci cum Domina Paupertate*<sup>2</sup>. It was natural, therefore, that this bishop should be chosen by Gregory IX as one of the three French bishops commissioned to defend the young Order of St Francis against its many enemies among the conservative clergy<sup>3</sup>. And his attitude goes far to explain why, in later days, the most prominent churchmen can be found criticizing monastic landlordism in terms scarcely outdone by the heretics. Cardinal Hugues de St-Cher (1260) sees the older Orders with the eyes of a Dominican reformer; the monks of old "were a garment

<sup>1</sup> Compare Villon, *Grand Testament*, xxi:

"Nécessité faict gens mesprendre,  
Et faim saillir le loup des boys."

<sup>2</sup> Ed. d'Alençon, Rome, 1900; translated in *The Temple Classics*; another translation by M. Carmichael.

<sup>3</sup> Valois, pp. 102-5.

of mercy, clothing the poor and feeding the famished; but now they oppress the poor, and flay the naked by rapine and exactions; for the clergy and Religious use their subjects and their men worse than knights or barons do." Longland of Lincoln saw them with the eyes of a hardworking bishop; he complained in 1526 to the abbot of Oseney that "abbots and priors...are intent only upon money and not upon the increase of religious life; and, outside [their monasteries], they flay their subjects worse than the secular clergy or the laity do"<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Fuller quotations and references in *The Medieval Village*, pp. 143-4.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ABBOT AS BARON

IF we descend from such generalities to more concrete details, we shall find that these help to explain both sides of the monastic problem. For we must remind ourselves, once again, that no picture of the cloister is true which does not explain two very different facts—different, though in no sense contradictory. On the one hand, monasticism as a world-institution, apart from the special vocation of a small minority of souls, was killed through one-half of Europe by the Reformation, and through the remaining half by the French Revolution. On the other hand, if we strike an average for the Dark and Middle Ages, it may claim to have been, for 1000 years, not only one of the most beneficent of institutions in Europe, but one of the wealthiest and most powerful. Here, therefore, let us try to see the power of the abbot and his monks as the peasant and artisan saw them in 1200 A.D.

In emphasizing the state of an abbot, and the grandeur of his monastery, we are on very safe ground; for, on this particular point, all men are agreed: so that, to quote from the two extremes of the scale, the vivid and unflattering contemporary picture in the fifteenth-century romance of *Petit Jean de Saintré*<sup>1</sup> is in full agreement with Cardinal Gasquet's highly-coloured and idealized modern portrait of *The Last Abbot of Glastonbury*. Again, Chaucer's thumbnail sketch of the monk who, though only prior of a cell, was "a lordly man, to be an abbot able," agrees with the complaints of contemporary preachers that these monastic officials assumed a high-born state; it tallies with Jocelin of Brakelond's unconscious revelations as to the social gulf between cloisterers and townsfolk at St Edmundsbury<sup>2</sup>. The great abbot

<sup>1</sup> I hope to publish a long translation from this fifteenth-century novel, dear to Walter Scott, in my book of monastic gleanings.

<sup>2</sup> Tr. Clarke, ch. xiii. For the confession of Abbot Gilles li Muisis, and the ingenious shifts of Thomas Waldensis in his defence of abbatial dignity against the Lollards, see Appendix 4.

was a baron, the monks were a squirearchy; and they would have been more than human if they had forgotten this.

English monasticism, it is true, never reached that pitch of anti-democratic sentiment which was common in France and Germany long before the Reformation, and which grew to intolerable excesses in almost all Roman Catholic countries from thence to the French Revolution. We, in these islands, had no houses formally restricted to postulants who could show their sixteen quarters of nobility; it could never be said of our abbeys that they had literally become "almshouses for the nobility," as contemporaries complained in fifteenth-century Germany; no English house could have been described with the quiet indignation to which Dom Martène was roused in 1709 by his visits to the noble-born monks of Gigny and St-Claude<sup>1</sup>. We had nothing to rival the abbey of Farfa in Italy, which possessed 683 priories and churches, two cities, and nearly 500 smaller towns and villages<sup>2</sup>; or Cluny in Burgundy, perhaps richer still, or St-Germain-des-Prés, which had some 40,000 tenants and dependents; or other French and German monasteries of almost equal wealth and state<sup>3</sup>. No English abbot "had among his vassals 4 archdukes, 10 counts palatine and margraves, 27 counts,

<sup>1</sup> Janssen-Pastor, vol. 1, p. 723; Martène, *Voy. Litt.* 1717, pp. 172-5. Not by any means the earliest, but perhaps the most significant example is that of St Hildegard, in about 1150 (P.L. vol. 197, pp. 336-8). The abbess of Andernach wrote humbly for information on two points; the second was: "It seems no less marvellous to us, that you admit into your [nunnery of Bingen] only girls who are distinguished for their race and good birth; this breeds great wonder in us. Yet we know that you do it with reasonable cause, since you are not unaware that our Lord Himself, in the early Church, chose fishers and middling and poor folk; and that St Peter said afterwards to the Gentile converts, 'In very deed I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons,' and St Paul, 'There are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen.'" Hildegard admits the fact, and gives a very strange reason: God approves these class-distinctions as a means of avoiding quarrels and recriminations: "for who would assemble all his cattle in a single stall?—oxen and asses, sheep and goats together."

<sup>2</sup> Muratori, *Scriptores*, vol. 11, ii (Milan, 1726), p. 295: "Ecclesias & coenobia 683, urbes duas, . . . castella 132, oppida 16, portus 7, . . . villas 14, . . . pagos 315, complures lacus, pascua, decimas, portoria, ac praediorum immanem copiam." Guérard estimates the income of St-Germain-des-Prés, in 800 A.D., at considerably more than a million francs of nineteenth-century currency.

<sup>3</sup> *Irminon*, vol. 1, pp. 358 ff., 903, 928. St-Wandrille had some 25,000; Fulda enormous numbers; the great Alcuin, as abbot of four houses, had some 20,000 dependents.

and 28 barons and knights"<sup>1</sup>; nor had any of ours, like that of St-Riquier, 100 knights of his own, who came in their richest array to wait upon him on great holy-days, "so that their wealth gave the abbey the appearance of a royal court"<sup>2</sup>. None, again, made history in exactly the same way as those of St Benedict's own monastery of Subiaco, who led armies and stormed rival castles, in pursuance of their own monastic feuds, like any lay prince<sup>3</sup>. But our abbot of Gloucester, when he went abroad, was allowed, even by the severest visitors, to ride with a train of 19 horses and 12 hunting-dogs, and he had domestic servants in proportion to this state<sup>4</sup>. The abbot of Westminster had 43 servants of his own, at a time when he had not twice as many monks, and the monks also had their own numerous servants<sup>5</sup>. These, and half a dozen other heads of English houses, could compare in wealth and worldly dignity with that saintly prior of St-Martin-de-Tournai whose extraordinary humility and self-control in his high office are thus recorded by a contemporary panegyrist: "Whereas he held the priorate for nearly 30 years, there was not one—and I say this not only of the monks but even of the servants—whom he called a fool or a dizzard—*stultum vel fatuum*—or upon whom he ever laid a hand in wrath"<sup>6</sup>. Yet, even in comparatively moderate England the great abbot sat as a peer in parliament, and nearly all abbots enjoyed the usual advantages of the medieval capitalist in the law courts, where judges were habitually accessible to bribes. Account-rolls of all kinds frequently testify to the prevalence of this practice; and monastic account-rolls among the rest.

<sup>1</sup> F. Hurter, *Tableau des Institutions, etc.*, tr. J. Cohen, 1843, vol. II, p. 66. But of course these were only "vassals" in the technical sense that they owed the abbot certain rents or services for the lands they held from him.

<sup>2</sup> *Irminon*, vol. I, p. 562.

<sup>3</sup> Mabillon, *Annales*, vol. v, p. 555 and VI, 124; for the wars of other great Italian monasteries see *Cava*, p. 205; Affarosi, *Mon. di San Prospero di Reggio*, 1733, vol. I, pp. 224 ff.; Malladra and Ranieri, *La Sacra di San Michele*, 1907, pp. 239, 250.

<sup>4</sup> *Chron. Glouc.* R.S. vol. I, pp. lxxxvi and xcii: compare the visitor's injunctions for 1301 in the same book. When Gregory IX and Nicholas IV restrained the luxury of Cluniac heads, they cut down the abbot's retinues to sixteen mounted men, and the priors' to eight, or even as few as two in the case of the smallest houses (*Bullae Tres*, pp. 8, 25).

<sup>5</sup> *Wenlok*, p. 104; cf. his silver plate, p. 23, minstrels, p. 101, and similar indications, pp. 98, 108, 130.

<sup>6</sup> *Migne*, P.L. vol. 180, col. 119.

Abbot Whethamstede of St Albans, for instance, records within a very short while the expenditure, on two judges and a sheriff, of something like £300 in pre-war money<sup>1</sup>; and at the papal court it was notorious that money was still more useful. Although by no exaggeration it could be said of our royal Westminster, as of royal St-Denis in France, that the mitre might be weighed in the scales against a crown and sceptre<sup>2</sup>, yet some idea may be formed of our monastic dignities from the style in which Abbot Curteys of St Edmundsbury entertained Henry VI in 1434<sup>3</sup>. The whole mass of English evidence confirms the conclusion drawn from the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* by Professor Savine: "The monasteries could not be democratic institutions.... However heterogeneous the interests of the professed Religious might have been, the majority of them could not but sympathize with the upper and middle classes, in a way altogether at variance with anything like a democratic spirit"<sup>4</sup>.

In no contemporary document is their spirit brought out more clearly and picturesquely than in the terrier of Glastonbury drawn up by Abbot Beere in 1516. We may safely pass over this interval of 300 years to quote from it here, since our abbey of 1200 would, on the whole, have stood out quite as nobly against the ordinary villager's or citizen's dwelling, and there were far greater abbots than Beere in the continental Europe of that date; it is only that the terrier happens to supply with unusual clearness and conciseness the picture that we need<sup>5</sup>. The abbatial manors, their buildings, their privileges and immunities, are here blazoned forth in detail; scarcely does even the Arthurian

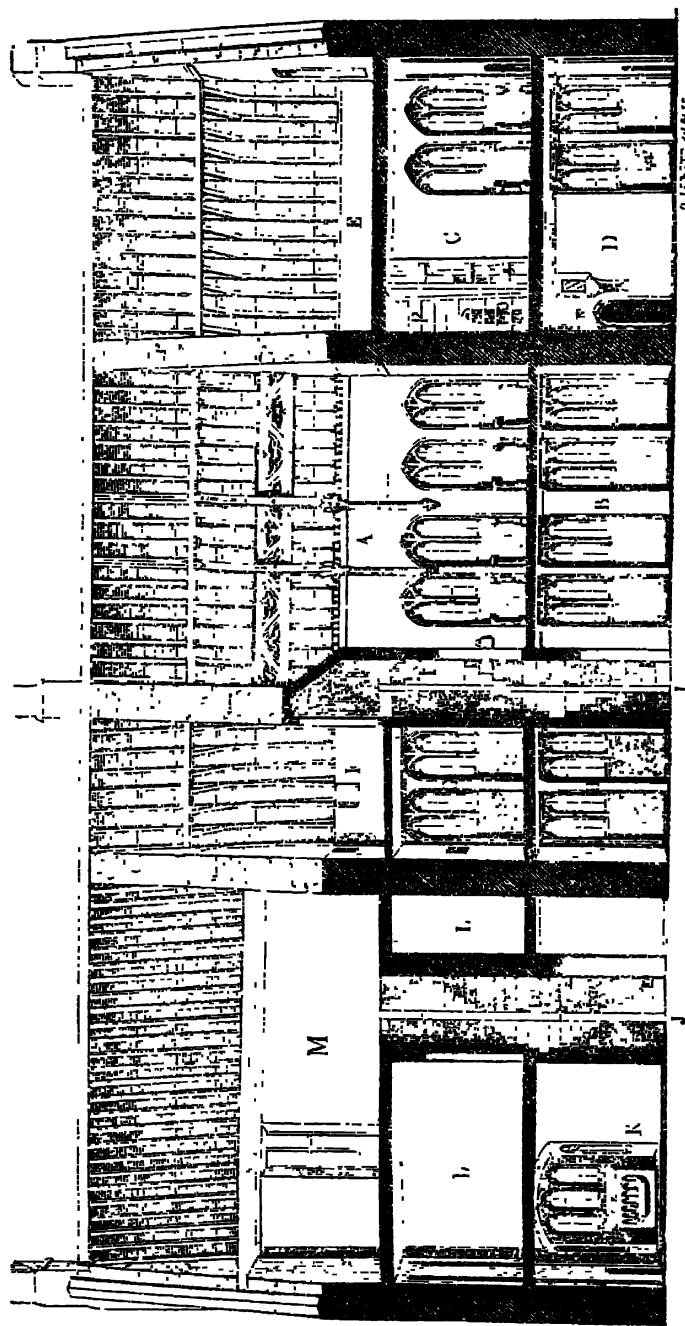
<sup>1</sup> Amundesham, vol. II (R.S. 1871), p. 256. Compare the stories told by Jacques de Vitry (*Exempla*, ed. Crane, pp. 20, 21; *From St Francis to Dante*, 2nd ed., p. 199); and, on the other side, St Anselm's disdain of taking any legal advantage (Eadmer, l. I, c. v, 37).

<sup>2</sup> *Irminon*, vol. I, p. 903: "The abbey of St-Denis, for instance, was weighed in the balance against a kingdom by Pope John VIII at the council of Troyes. A sceptre was offered for an abbot's staff; but Louis le Bègue refused, and the offer remained without effect." "The great monasteries of France," adds Guérard, "were real States."

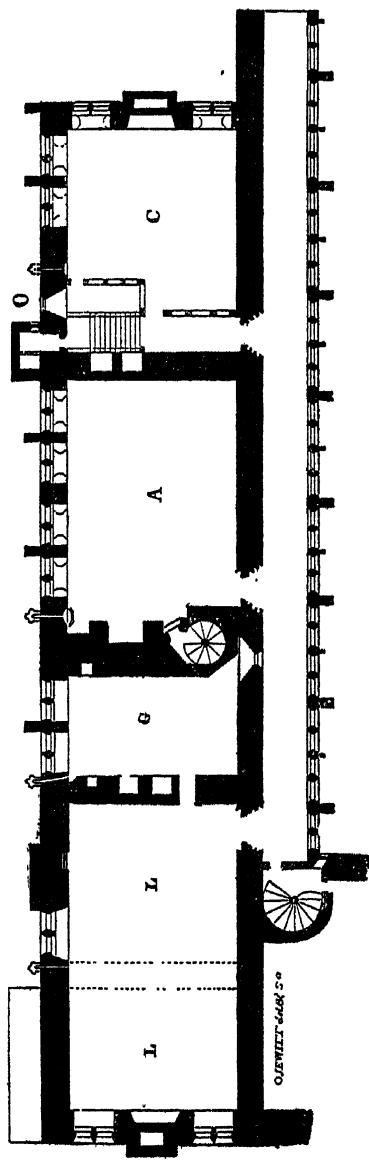
<sup>3</sup> *Memorials of St Ed.* vol. III, p. xxxi (R.S. 1896).

<sup>4</sup> pp. 266-7.

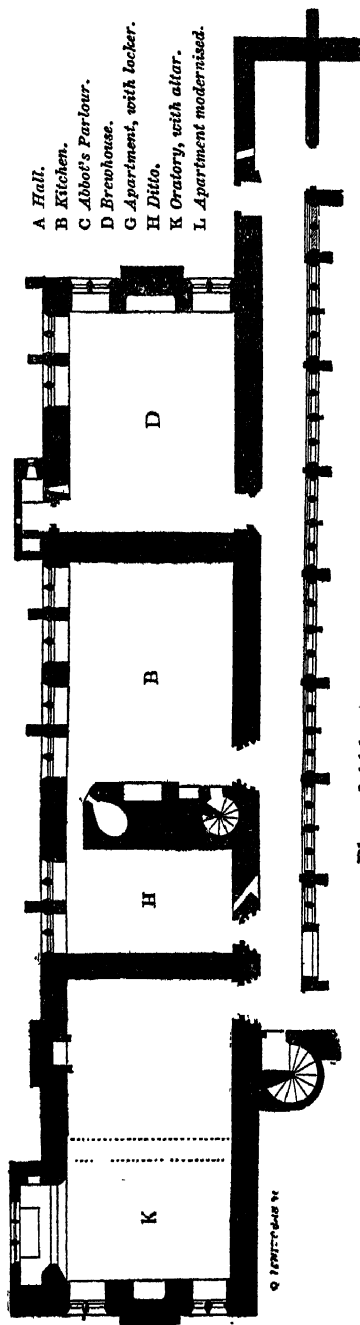
<sup>5</sup> The Musée de Cluny at Paris, for instance, was just the town house of the abbot of Cluny; and the prior of Hexham's town house at York may still be seen within the old minster precincts; these may profitably be compared with the views of the abbot's house at Wenlock given here in the text.



Section of Abbot's House at Wenlock (fifteenth century)



FIRST FLOOR.



- A Hall.
- B Kitchen.
- C Abbot's Parlour.
- D Brewhouse.
- G Apartment, with locker.
- H Ditto.
- K Oratory, with altar.
- L Apartment modernised.

Plan of Abbot's House at Wenlock



legend carry us more directly to the rich orchards and soft skies of Somerset than does this essentially business record of the sixteenth century. For the moment, we are transported from the drab realities of the present day to a fairyland of the past; here is Avalon, Apple-Island, dear to the romance and the art of many centuries<sup>1</sup>. Good Abbot Beere rises to a height of real poetry in cataloguing these manors to which he retires in turn for recreation, when he is set free from worldly business among the great, or when he wearies of his splendid hall and cloister at Glastonbury; or perhaps it is the scribe who is thus inspired by the thought of his master's magnificence<sup>2</sup>.

Sharpham (p. 310). Here is a certain pasture called *Vineyard* adjoining the park of Wyrehall on the south, full of all pleasance and divided into five enclosures, containing altogether [*blank*]. There is also a certain park called Sharpham, containing, with the meadow-crofts around the park, 382 acres; in which park the lord abbot Richard hath now newly built a most fair manor-house from his own purse, at great cost, adorned with a chapel, dining-halls, chambers, storehouses, kitchen and other necessary buildings; the whole enclosed with stone walls in front of the manor, and with sawn oaken palings. Here also is an orchard and fishponds. In this park 400 deer can be kept and 40 great beasts; and in the meadows round about the park 152 acres can be mown every year [to the value of £7. 12s.]. The underwood there is not here valued, seeing that it is taken and expended for the lord abbot's use, etc. [*sic*].

Mere. Here is an ample and most beautiful manor-house, founded in ancient times and adorned by this present Abbot with new buildings. There are pools, fishponds and orchards within the precincts of the manor-house, which is girt with walls of great height and strength, strongly fortified with stone; within which walls is the space of 3 acres 1 rood. *Item*, a grange with its farmyard, and an outhouse called Wodehouse on the western side of the manor aforesaid, containing 3½ roods. *Item*, a garden and orchard to the east, of 1 acre 3 roods, and the Botehaye of 1 acre 3 roods with its spinney; [in all] 4 acres 1 rood. *Item*, without the wall on the sea

<sup>1</sup> Compare Burne-Jones's letter to a friend who had gone to live in those parts: "Did you go along the causeway [to Glastonbury] and think of it once as a mere, and the shining island in the middle?... All the way from Amesbury to Glastonbury is romance land, the most beautiful and sweet that ever was, I think, soaked in wonderful tales... something that never can be written, I mean, and can never go out of the heart" (*Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. II, p. 168).

<sup>2</sup> T. Hearne, *Joh. Glaston*. (1726), vol. II, pp. 310 ff.: yet the terrier is not printed in its entirety even there.

side is half an acre of underwood, whereof the value is not here written, seeing that it is for the stock of the said manor.

There also is a great fishpond called the Mere, 1 mile long and  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile broad by estimation, which God Almighty made and ordained in ancient times at the prayers of St Benignus. The fish of this mere is not here valued, seeing that it is for the sustentation of the Abbot and monks, and for the recreation of their friends. There also is a dovecote, not here valued, seeing that the doves are expended in the Lord Abbot's household; yet it was wont to render 30 shillings yearly, as appeareth from an ancient account-roll. There are two weirs, called Hacchewere and Bordenwere, where the catch of eels and other fish is worth in general [*blank*] yearly; and another near Lichelake called Cockeswere, lately let for 106s. 8d., and now rented by John Gyblat at 20s. a year; and again, on the eastern side of the sea, another called Jameswere, lately let at 13s. 4d., which is now kept in the Lord Abbot's hands.

There also is a wood at Westhey, called Westheyparke, containing 4 acres of oak and ash; where the herons build and rear, on an average, 100 nestlings a year; in which park the grass and underwood is let for 6s. 8d. a year. At Mere is another wood, called The Grove, covered with oak and ash and containing 7 acres. There likewise the heron was wont to breed; and the grass and underwood are rented by Thomas Clapp at 7s. a year. [The terrier goes on to specify wide heaths, moors and alder-groves belonging to the manor, and two quarries of lias.]

Eastbrent (p. 231). Here is a manor-house decently and sumptuously built by John Selwood late Abbot, containing a chapel, hall, dining-hall, upper and lower chambers, storehouse, cellar, pantry, kitchen, larder, and westward of the kitchen a building called Wodehouse, with rooms above called Gisten-chambers, and divers other chambers nobly built; likewise a costly porch with [*blank*] and arms, and enclosed with sawn palings to the height of eight feet, with a garden of one acre within the said pale. In the outer court is a stable with upper chamber and a hayhouse built by the same Abbot; whereof the site, with the aforesaid farmyard and the pinfold, containeth 3 roods. To the north is an orchard of 3 acres  $1\frac{1}{2}$  roods, planted by the Abbot aforesaid with apples and pears of the most excellent fruit, the produce whereof is worth in ordinary years 40s. Around the aforesaid orchard stand elms and oak trees of marvellous height and girth, where herons are wont to build and to rear their young, etc. [*sic*]; and the firewood from these trees is not here accounted, since it is of the stock of this manor.

Wrighton (p. 348). Here is a most fair manor-house consisting of a great hall, with spacious chambers on either side, storehouse, cellar, kitchen, larder and stable in the inner court. It hath great

walls, fortified with turrets [*propugnaculis*] on the eastern circumference and with deep pools on the west; it containeth (with the lower court and the garden) 1 acre. The farmyard without, together with grange, ox-stalls and pinfold, containeth half an acre. . . . There is an orchard of 2 acres 2½ roods, hired by the hayward at a yearly rent of 3s. 4d.

Houndstreet [near Bath] (p. 354). Here is a small and most pleasant manor-house in the wood, erected by the Lord John Chynnock formerly Abbot of Glastonbury: viz. with a certain chapel built in honour of St Nicholas, hall, chambers, storehouse, and kitchen; together with a building westward of the hall called La Yatehouse, and a great stable and other necessary buildings; likewise an orchard and farmyard. This manor is fortified with a great ditch called La Mote, and a little spring that feedeth it; and it is surrounded with sawn oaken palings, containing 1½ acres and ten square [perches].

The record is incomplete.

Such are the first five manors portrayed in the terrier; and the abbot had other manor-houses in Wiltshire and elsewhere, at least ten in all<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, he had other lands, farmed out at that time on a large scale, where he could always count at need upon hospitality from a well-to-do tenant in a roomy homestead. In 1327, when the tenants of Bury St Edmunds rebelled, they sacked and burned 13 of the abbey's manors; this list, however, would contain lesser houses also<sup>2</sup>. The prior of Durham had at least five manor-houses of first-rate size; and, as Canon Fowler truly says, "the lord Prior, besides being so eminent an ecclesiastic, was a great county magnate, ranking

<sup>1</sup> *Rentalia*, p. xxiii: "A costlier burden was laid upon [the abbey of Glastonbury] by the enlargement of the manorial houses. This was done by the very best Abbots, and is written by the Chroniclers amongst their good deeds. It was popular with the monks as impressing the grandeur of the institution upon their dependents. Every manor had of necessity a house where the reeve could dwell, and a hall large enough for the hall-mote or manor-court, and the Scot-ale, but these needed much enlargement for an Abbot's or even a cellarer's retinue. In the fourteenth century, we read that Abbot Adam, 1322-35, built handsome chapels and chambers at Meare, Pilton, and Domerham, and almost every Abbot in the fifteenth century did the same thing. Abbot Selwood rebuilt the manor-house of E. Brent, with grand 'gesten chambers.' Abbot Beere 1493-1524 built two sumptuous houses within two miles of the Abbey in his parks of Northwood and Sharpham, these were not for manorial use, but for pleasurable occupation. From the Chroniclers it appears that besides his state lodgings at the Abbey, and his two park houses, and his London house, the Abbot of the fifteenth century had at least ten manor-houses capable of receiving him for a sojourn, and kept in readiness thereto."

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1327-30, p. 214.

with the Nevilles of Raby and Brancepeth, the Percys of Alnwick, and the rest of the northern nobles; while in Durham itself he kept a state only a little inferior to that of the great Prince Bishop himself." One little trait recorded in the diary of Archbishop Symon of Bourges, in 1290, illustrates the noble state kept by these monastic lords and their guests. When he visited at the Cistercian abbey of Obazine, "he was most honourably received by the abbot, who bought growing corn from his porter at the price of two bushels of wheat, to strew the lord archbishop's chamber and the hall wherein he ate"<sup>1</sup>. The archiepiscopal scribe records this with evident satisfaction, but we may guess how the peasants regarded this waste of the coming harvest.

In Germany, abbatial state was even greater, perhaps, than elsewhere. Here, for instance, is a claim of jurisdiction: "Item, the lord abbot of St Maximin is a right landlord and right lord of all inheritance over man and ban, and all that appertaineth to the holding; over earth and water and bush, journey and flight—*zock und flock*—grass and leaf, bough and twig, ways and paths, and all that is achieved or may be achieved." It was not unusual for abbots, in the earlier Middle Ages, to claim the right of conferring the order of knighthood; but this was forbidden in later times, *e.g.* by the Council of Westminster in 1102<sup>2</sup>. The abbot of St-Claude, in the Jura, had "the right of giving patents of nobility and legitimation, and of pardoning criminals condemned to death. These privileges were confirmed by Philippe-le-Bon, duke of Burgundy, by Philip, archduke of Austria, and by his father Maximilian"<sup>3</sup>. At Ebersheimmünster, a mere moderate-sized abbey between the Ill and the Rhine, "When the abbot will go on a journey, he shall take a steersman from Weissenweiler and another to help him from Rangweiler, and a man from the lord Diemen's mill and the lady Adelheid's mill; from master Wolfgang's mill and Eckehard's mill a man; from Ludwig's mill a man; from Walter's mill at the [abbey?]

<sup>1</sup> Baluze, *Misc.* Bk iv, p. 374.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. i, p. 382, cap. 18; cf. Mabillon, *Annales*, vol. v, p. 421. When Henry I founded his great abbey of Reading, he found it necessary to stipulate that the abbot should not dub knights (Dugdale-Caley, vol. iv, p. 28 b).

<sup>3</sup> Martène, *Voy. Litt.* p. 176.

gate a man"<sup>1</sup>. This was in 1320; in 1488, Beringen in the Saar valley belonged to the abbot of Metloch, far from the first rank; and the customal prescribes:

When an abbot of Metloch comes to the yearly manor-court, he shall come with a squire to keep his horse, saddle, spurs, bridle and leather hosen, and with a scribe and a steward; and, if any good fellow—*guter Gesell*—meet with him in the field, the abbot may bring him also; nay, if yet another join himself unto the first, him also may the abbot bring. Forth shall the abbot ride [from his abbey] with a hawk and three greyhounds; at Beringen he shall find a fire without smoke, and they shall give his horses straw up to the belly and raw fodder up to the ears, and a hen for the hawk and a loaf of bread for the greyhounds.

The abbot of St Peter's in the Black Forest, when he rode to Rechtenbach, had right to claim "for his hawk, a hen to eat and a perch to sit upon; for his two greyhounds a loaf of bread and a cushion for their bed; and for each horse a bushel of oats"; this was about the same time. The Reformation did something to abate this: in 1606, we find that even the great prince-archbishop of Trèves claims only to bring one hawk and one hound on his pastoral visits, and to keep for himself any hare which his hound may take<sup>2</sup>. The customs of two other villages belonging to the abbot of Metloch throw farther light on this subject. At Metloch itself,

if a poor man [*arm Man*, a common expression for "tenant"] cannot help himself nor earn his bread [on his holding], then the poor man shall first reckon well with his creditors and pay them; then he shall be free to go whithersoever he please and try his best luck. And if the abbot meet him on his way, and he beseech his grace for his transgression, that he be not hindered in his free departure, then shall the abbot take one foot out of the stirrup and dismount to help the poor man forth, that he be unhindered.

<sup>1</sup> *Weisthümer*, I, 571, 669.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 63; I, 364, 841. I have given evidence elsewhere (*Med. Village*, pp. 117, 216-17 and Appendix 29) for the hunting monk, all ecclesiastical prohibitions notwithstanding. Such instances might easily be multiplied; here is another English instance. The sub-prior of Wierscroft testified how, during the last years before the Dissolution, "the priors, during all the time that [he] was there [*i.e.* 30 years], kept hounds, greyhounds and hawks of their own, and did hunt, course and hawk throughout the waste of Charnwood unto the *saulte* of the parks of Bradgate, Groby and Loughborough, fallow deer, roe, foxes, hares; and did hawk at partridges and pheasants, and for this purpose kept a huntsman" (*Journ. Brit. Arch. Assoc.* vol. XIX (1863), p. 181).

At first sight, this gives us a moving picture of the abbot's condescension and helpfulness, as he puts his shoulder to the poor man's wheel. But we note that he takes only one foot out of the stirrup; and other manor records make this still plainer: e.g. "the steward shall keep one foot in the stirrup, and with the other help the poor man and say 'drive on! and may luck so favour thee that thou shalt come back in a year's time!'" In short, this was the abbot's formal way of showing, by half dismounting, that he had no legal objection to his tenant's departure; for, as another Metloch customal puts it, "even though a duke of Lorraine himself meet him, the duke shall dismount with one foot on the ground, and halt with the other in the stirrup, and give the poor man help and aid, that he may the better help himself and go thence"<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the duchess of Lorraine had far less claim on the villagers of Beringen than the abbot had. "If a duchess come thither, then a tenant of the abbey shall spread a cloth on his table and lay vessels thereon; if she will drink or eat, she may provide for herself; and, if it befall that she cannot go farther without help, a tenant shall be told off to help her to the nearest road"<sup>2</sup>. In early days, great abbots had sometimes usurped episcopal privileges: as the Middle Ages wore on, one after another bought from the pope the episcopal dignities of mitre and staff. By the early thirteenth century, this was already exciting serious alarm among the diocesans, and solemn protests to the pope<sup>3</sup>. St Bernard, before this, had branded the pretensions of many among his brother-abbots with indignant scorn: "They rob their monasteries, in order to obtain emancipation [from episcopal control by privileges bought in Rome]; they buy themselves off from obedience"; if they thus covet episcopal insignia and episcopal

<sup>1</sup> This was, in fact, the equivalent of the tenant's right of *désaveu* in France, for which see Seignobos, *Régime Féodal*, pp. 50 ff., or *The Medieval Village*, p. 410.

<sup>2</sup> *Weisthümer*, II, 60, 63; Grimm, *Rechtsalt.* I, 479 ff. For the onerous requirement of bedclothes, quilts, etc., for a great abbot when he visited one of his own villages, and for the peasants' rebellions against this in later years, see the story of Esmans in Guilhiermoz, p. 302 and *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> See Berlière (*Honorius*, p. 479), who adds: "nothing can better show the stir which was provoked in ecclesiastical circles by the abbots' use of pontifical insignia, than the collective letter of the bishops in the province of Reims to thank the pope for having limited this use to the abbot of Anchin."

state, why do they not aspire to confer Holy Orders also? "How much am I stirred to say against this impudent presumption"<sup>1</sup>.

The medieval abbot, then, took very kindly to his baronial dignity—or semi-baronial, if his abbey was of the lower rank<sup>2</sup>. All the more kindly, as contemporaries assure us and as human nature prepares us to believe, if his own origin had been more humble than his later fortunes; there was no prouder prelate in English history than Thomas Wolsey. And the simple monk, in these great abbeys, looked upon the toiling peasantry with the eye of a county squire, or of those squire-parsons who were among the most characteristic, and not the least valuable, factors in English society a century ago. There were, of course, many small and poor and struggling monasteries of both sexes; between these and the labouring poor there might be the same cheek-by-jowl familiarity as between Parson Adams and his flock, or Major Ponto and his valet-factotum Stripes. But, in the case of a great abbey, it needed much charity and goodwill to bridge the gulf between the monks and the labouring classes. This need not be dwelt on at length; it comes out sufficiently in such easily-accessible studies as J. R. Green's *Abbot and Town* and J. A. Froude's *Annals of an English Abbey*, and, above all, in one of the few first-rate sources which cheap translations have brought home to the general public—Jocelin of Brakelond's *Chronicle* of Bury St Edmunds. There is no better book in all Europe for the self-revelation of the medieval Benedictine mind; no summary or commentary can hope to reproduce the exact mentality of this Bury cloister. Even Carlyle's vivid lightning-flashes give a most imperfect idea of the deep essential self-satisfaction and sense of superiority, broken only at the surface by ripples of domestic quarrel or external litigation; Abbot Samson might indeed vex his righteous soul, but the vast majority of his brethren fulfilled Teufelsdröckh's formula for contentment; they had a sound digestion and no too rebellious

<sup>1</sup> *De Off. Episc.* §§ 33, 37.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of monastic cathedrals, while the bishop was nominally abbot, the prior was practically so. For very full and sympathetic pictures of such a prior's dignities and responsibilities, see Canon Fowler's preface to the *Durham Account Rolls* (Surtees Soc. vol. 103), pp. iii ff. and Kitchin's *Obedientary Rolls of St Swithin's*, pp. 33-9.

intellect<sup>1</sup>. The St Albans monks, again, to whom any rustic poacher upon the conventual rabbit-warren was a violator of "Christ's patrimony," were entirely of the spirit of Jocelin's brethren at Bury. Abbot Samson was glad to commute for a fair money-equivalent the oppressive feudal dues which led to "taking distresses in the houses of the poor, sometimes taking trivets, sometimes doors, and sometimes other utensils," so that "the old women came out with their distaffs, threatening and abusing the cellarer and his men." But

when the abbot made mention of this in the chapter, the convent was very angry, and took it in ill part, so much so that Benedict the sub-prior in the chapter, answering for all, said: "That man, Abbot Ordning, who lies there, would not have done such a thing for five hundred marks of silver." Abbot Samson, though he himself felt angry, put off the matter for a time<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dean Kitchin's verdict on the Winchester records: "Self-centred, profoundly selfish, was the spirit which often ruled the monastic life... For the Benedictine was, in his collective capacity, a great feudal lord, who left to those beneath him in the hard social scale the care of the domestic and menial duties of life" (*l.c.* pp. 21, 30).

<sup>2</sup> Chap. XIII, p. 131 (C.S. p. 73); cf. all the rest of the chapter. The tombstones of departed abbots were nearly always in the choir or in the chapter house. Farther evidence for abbatial dignity and power may be found in Appendix 6.



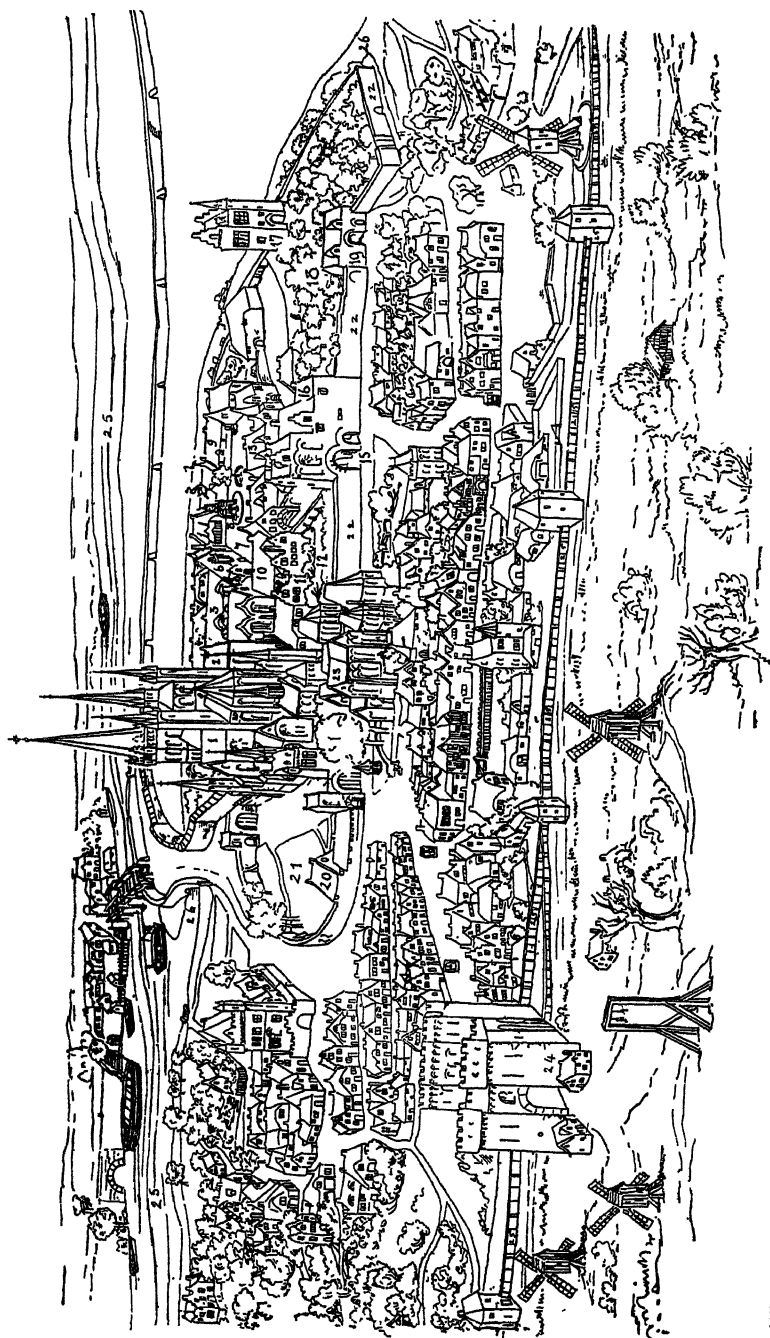
## CHAPTER IV

### THE MONK AS SQUIRE

THE squirearchy of the monk, though it has received less universal recognition than the baronial status of the abbot, is a matter which needs considerable emphasis if we are to balance both sides of monastic history.

The complaint comes early, and is repeated frequently by orthodox and unexceptionable writers, that the monk often managed to live at greater ease in the cloister than he would have done in the world. As we have seen from William of Auvergne, collective wealth naturally connoted individual comfort for those who chose to claim it; and, though a small percentage of monks subjected themselves to privations and mortifications which are not even implied, let alone prescribed, by the Rule, yet many more contrived to soften singularly that routine of plain living and hard working which St Benedict contemplated. That is why medieval contrasts will come out even more glaringly in this second volume than in the first. The black or grey frock will sometimes cover the hair-shirt of real sanctity and self-denial, sometimes the fool's motley and mere crazy wantonness, sometimes the boredom of a soul glad to escape from the rough-and-tumble of the world, yet unwilling to face the still harder fight along the narrow way to heaven; most frequently of all, perhaps, these men and women are of the class that is difficult to define in colour or in form, people whom we can best understand by remembering that they were very like ourselves, and that their lives, like ours, varied little from day to day.

Monastic buildings, of course, were of great magnificence. Until quite the end of the Middle Ages, the monk was almost the only man who lived in a stone house, apart from princes and nobles and Jews and wealthy merchants. Moreover, they were often strongly fortified; we still see this at Battle and St Mary's, York, and the great gates of Bury St Edmunds; it is still more evident abroad, as at Prémontré and Cluny and Maulbronn. At Vézelay, where an important town grew up round the abbey,



The Abbey of St-Bavon, outside Ghent

From a drawing of the sixteenth century)

"the [town] fortifications left much to be desired; it was only the monastic precincts which had been seriously worked upon; the rest, to which the monks attached far less importance, had always been neglected" until the English invasions<sup>1</sup>. Of the abbey of Cluny, Salimbene writes:

Know thou, who readest this, that this is a most noble monastery of Black Monks in Burgundy, of the Order of St Benedict; and there are several priors in the cloister; and so great is the multitude of buildings there, that the pope with his cardinals and his whole court could be entertained there, and the emperor likewise at the same time with his court, without disturbing the monks, nor need a single monk, on their account, quit his cell or endure the least incommodity<sup>2</sup>.

There were several on the Continent which were quite comparable with Cluny<sup>3</sup>; but here it will be better to quote details from much smaller houses, which were not in the first rank even in these less wealthy countries of England and Scotland. Dunfermline abbey is described, in the thirteenth century, as "enclosing three plough-lands [360 acres] within its precincts, and contained palaces of such magnificence that three kings, with their trains, might be accommodated in it at once without inconvenience"<sup>4</sup>. The description is highly coloured, and the acreage is certainly exceptional; Lewes priory contained about 40 acres, and in Norfolk the half-dozen greatest houses run from about 25 to 40<sup>5</sup>. But the words are significant of the impression produced on contemporaries. Vale Royal in Cheshire was built by the king in 1277 for 100 Cistercian monks, and the buildings cost £37,000, a sum which would have to be multiplied by about 20 to bring it to modern pre-war terms. In 1509 these

<sup>1</sup> V. Petit, *Descr. du dépt. de l'Yonne*, Auxerre, 1882, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> *M.G.H.* xxxii, p. 213. In 1245, St Louis and the pope had in fact an official conference there (*ibid.* p. 177). Salimbene specifies three Benedictine houses which, for magnificence, could compare with Cluny: St Gall, Polirone in Lombardy, and Monte Cassino in central Italy.

<sup>3</sup> For other French examples see Luchaire, *Social France*, pp. 224 ff. For England, cf. licences to "crenellate," *i.e.* fortify, abbeys such as Evesham (Dugdale-Caley, vol. II, p. 20). During the Hundred Years' War, the abbeys were treated as natural fortresses on both sides.

<sup>4</sup> *Reg. Dunferm.* p. xxv.

<sup>5</sup> The Castleacre precincts enclosed 29 (Dugdale-Caley, vol. v, p. 49). Compare the extension of Thetford precincts, *ibid.* p. 152. Butley, with about the same income, had "near 12 acres" (*ibid.* vol. vi, p. 380).

buildings were enjoyed by 19 monks<sup>1</sup>; and, though considerable portions of the monastery would serve for public purposes, a good half was for the monks themselves. It was natural for the owners of these great houses to claim, or accept, a title of worldly honour, the monk was called "my lord"—*dominus*, shortened to *Dom* or *Dan*—the nun was "my lady"—*domina*, *madame*. The friar-archbishop Pecham of Canterbury might criticize this as fundamentally irreligious<sup>2</sup>, but the custom had begun centuries before, and was destined to outlive him by even longer years. Monastic inventories show a considerable amount of silver plate for the table, in spite of Gregory IX's solemn prohibition of such luxuries for the whole Benedictine Order in his statutes of 1236<sup>3</sup>. Canterbury cathedral priory was one of the greatest offenders here<sup>4</sup>; but there was scarcely a house, above the level of bankruptcy, which had not its store of plate. When Grosseteste visited Ramsey (1251), he found monks in possession of costly private drinking-cups which they kept, with other forbidden possessions, in their own chests; and Matthew Paris is scandalized by the righteous zeal with which Grosseteste broke these up, "whereas, if he had been circum-spect, he might have given them unbroken to the poor"<sup>5</sup>. The imposing list of silver plate and precious cups at Winchester cathedral priory may be found in Strype's *Cranmer*, at the end of Appendix 16. The monks of Worcester had in their refectory 12 great bowls, parcel-gilt; at Titchfield, a much poorer house, among many other pieces, the abbot and 12 brethren had 84 silver spoons. In 1396, the abbot of Meaux had silver plate weighing nearly 33 lbs., together with mazers and other precious cups<sup>6</sup>. And precious metals for adornment of clothing and harness, less explicitly forbidden by Gregory IX, were no less frequently used in fact. Not only can we infer this from the

<sup>1</sup> *Ledger*, pp. 44, 191. The monastic buildings within the walls of Paris were valued in 1789 at 15 million francs (De la Gorce, vol. I, p. 55; cf. p. 8).

<sup>2</sup> *Epp.* R.S. p. 849 (Godstow, 1284).

<sup>3</sup> *Reg. Od. Rig.* p. 644.

<sup>4</sup> See the inventories published in *Archaeol. Journal*, vol. 53 (1896) for the years 1331 and 1334 (pp. 258 ff.).

<sup>5</sup> *Chron. Maj.* vol. v, p. 227.

<sup>6</sup> *Reports and Papers of Ass. Arch. Soc.* vol. XI (1872), p. 304; Dugdale-Caley, vol. VI, p. 935; *Chron. de Melsa*, R.S. vol. II, p. lxxviii. Compare the inventories of silver at Halesowen (*Collect. Anglo-Prem.* C.S. vol. II, p. 263), Pontoise (Depoin, p. 112) and Troarn (Sauvage, p. 423).

tedious frequency of the prohibitions in Chapter General and visitational records, but it is explicitly recorded in later generations by such orthodox onlookers as the author of *Dives and Pauper*. He writes:

To them that have the benefices and the goods of Holy Church it [be]longeth principally to give alms and to have cure of the poor people. Therefore St Bernard, in *Epistola ad Eugenium*, saith thus: "The naked cry, and the hungry plain them and say [to] the bishops: 'What doth gold in your bridles? it may not put away cold nor hunger from the bridle. It is ours that ye so spend in pomp and vanity; ye take it from us cruelly and spend it vainly.'" And in another epistle that he wrote to a canon he said thus: "If thou serve well God's altar, it is granted to thee to live by the altar, not to buy [thee] bridles silvered or overgilt. For what thou keepest to thyself of the altar, passing thine honest needful living, it is sacrilege." Therefore these men of Holy Church that buckle their shoon with buckles of silver, and use great silver harness in their girdles and knives, and men of Religion—monks and canons and such other—that use great ouches of silver and gold on their copes to fasten their hoods against the wind, and ride on high horses with saddles harnessed with gold and silver, more pompously than lords, be strong thieves and do great sacrilege, so spending the goods of Holy Church in vanity and pride [and] lust of the flesh, by which goods the poor folk should live. A lady of a thousand marks by year can pin her hood against the wind with a small pin of latten, twelve for a penny. But a monk that is bounden to poverty by his profession will have an ouch or a brooch of gold and silver, in value of a noble and much more<sup>1</sup>.

Again, the brethren kept many servants, quite apart from those who may be counted rather as workmen than as domestics. At Bury, about 1280, there were 111 servants to 80 monks; this is no extraordinary proportion<sup>2</sup>. At the smaller house of Ramsey, about 1270, the total of abbey attendants was 95, of whom 57

<sup>1</sup> *Com.* vii, cap. 12, col. 3. Cardinal Gasquet, by picking just three brief and detached sentences from this long passage, succeeds in making it seem to support his contention that "our Catholic forefathers in pre-Reformation days knew no such division and distinction between the rich man and the poor man as obtained later on" (*Eve of the Reformation*, 1900, p. 353). As usual, he supplies no reference for his quotations, but leaves the reader to pick them out as best he can from this folio volume, inaccessible except in the few greatest libraries.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale-Caley, vol. III, p. 161. This excludes the eleven chaplains who helped the monks to sing the statutory Masses. A slightly earlier list, on p. 158, gives only 100 servants; another, on p. 159, gives 99.

were servants in the strict sense<sup>1</sup>. At Glastonbury, in 1322, 60 monks had 60 servants, of whom we should count two or three as artisans nowadays, yet there was not one whose work could not easily have been done by the actual monks, if they had not lost the tradition of labouring for themselves<sup>2</sup>. At Bitlesden abbey (Cistercian) the monks, 11 in number, were employing in 1535 "servants 51, whereof hinds 24, waiting-servants 13, boys and children 9, women for the dairy 4"<sup>3</sup>. At Evesham, about 1090, there were 55 resident monks, with 67 servants<sup>4</sup>. At Meaux in Yorkshire, about 1390, excluding the workmen, there remained "as many as 40 domestic servants; an inordinately numerous household, it would seem, for a family of 26 monks"<sup>5</sup>. Professor Savine reckons that, at the Dissolution, workmen and servants together outnumbered the monks by three to one<sup>6</sup>. Chapters General and Visitors frequently condemn the superfluity of servants in the monasteries.

Such, then, was this *Dominus* in his house, his grounds, his furniture and his apparel; and he often enjoyed also certain very extensive *libertates, franchises*, by which somewhat misleading word our ancestors described special privileges and powers. Abbots or priors might (though not in accordance with Church law) sit as judges in secular courts; in any case, they received exceptional treatment there. Prior Moore's diary records a gift of 3s. 4d. "to Thos Morysse, the constabul of the castyll, for the leyng the quysshon [= cushion] for me at the sessheons"<sup>7</sup>. And the monastery itself had not only the ordinary squire's powers of justice over its tenants in the manor-court, but often also almost full royal powers—*haute justice*—including that of life and death. Such cases are too frequent to excite

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale-Caley, vol. II, p. 549. At the Dissolution, Ramsey stood eleventh among the English abbeys in wealth. For farther indications as to servants see Savine, p. 223; Snape, p. 16, and Salter, *Aug. Chap.* p. 244. At the smaller houses, it is fairly frequent for later visitors to prescribe a reduction in the number of servants.

<sup>2</sup> See the article in the first volume of the Somerset Record Society's *Collectanea*, by Sir H. C. Maxwell-Lyte and Professor Willard.

<sup>3</sup> Dugdale-Caley, vol. v, p. 365.

<sup>4</sup> *Worcs. Hist. Soc.* 1907, p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> Dr Bond in introd. to *Chron. de Melsa*, R.S. vol. II, p. lxxi.

<sup>6</sup> *L.c.* p. 233. For the numbers at La Cava in Italy, see Guillaume, p. 261 and references. For those at even a small house like Ulverscroft (prior and seven canons) see *Journ. Brit. Arch. Assoc.* vol. XIX (1863), pp. 181-2.

<sup>7</sup> Noake, p. 175. This was shortly before the Reformation.

special attention: I have cited a few typical cases on pp. 189-91, 557, of *The Medieval Village*. And as the Dominus had "sac and soc, tol and theam, infangthief and gallows and other liberties," so had the Domina, the nun<sup>1</sup>. For it was, from the owner's point of view, an ordinary commercial asset. The jury of Nottingham were questioned in 1274-5 concerning the "liberties" of Blythe priory<sup>2</sup>; they knew that the monks enjoyed infangthief and gallows, because

in the days when Master Peter of Parkers was seneschal of Tickhill, a certain cutpurse was caught by the bailiffs in the market there; and then came Hugh Patz of Tickhill, William Cock, and Roger Clenegris on behalf of the said Master Peter, and seized the said thief by might and main from the hands of the said bailiffs of Blythe and took him to Tickhill castle; and, when the prior of Blythe demanded his court<sup>3</sup> of the said thief, [and pursued the case] from court to court until it should so be adjudged, then the said bailiffs demanded five shillings for the exemption<sup>3</sup> of the said thief; and, because the prior would not give those five shillings, except by judgement of the court, therefore the said bailiffs of Tickhill caused the said thief to be hanged at the gallows of Tickhill,

and thus got such spoils as the prior would have had if the execution had fallen to his men. *Magnum emolumentum est justitia*—the right of exercising justice is a very profitable concern—so ran the legal proverb in the Middle Ages<sup>4</sup>.

To plead that our ancestors in general, and in their inner conscience, saw no harm in this, would not be complimentary to their moral sense; and, in fact, the ripening civilization of the thirteenth century did begin to see harm in the system, as we do. Valois (p. 360) has printed a bull of Gregory IX in 1234, authorizing Bishop William of Auvergne to transfer these rights of *haute justice* from the monastery of Lagny to some secular lord, since the fact that "these rights have hitherto been committed to the monks, and have been exercised by them, has been not without grievous peril to souls and very great irregularity,

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Amesbury (Dugdale-Caley, vol. II, p. 339 b), Shaftesbury (*ibid.* p. 483 b: a claim possibly disallowed by the justices in the end); Romsey (*ibid.* p. 506 b); Elstow (*ibid.* vol. III, p. 414 a); Studley (*ibid.* vol. IV, p. 250 a).

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale-Caley, vol. IV, p. 622 b; cf. p. 623 a.

<sup>3</sup> I.e. his right of judging him. The rest of the sentence is ungrammatical, but the general meaning is plain. I have read *sic* for *si*; and it is possible that *exempt.* is a misreading for *executionem*.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Medieval Village*, pp. 73, 446 ff.

with no small scandal to the people, and detriment to the monastery aforesaid."

Even about the year 1200, we can trace a distinct tendency to treat monasticism from the more worldly point of view. The great Abbot Samson of St Edmundsbury confessed frankly to his friends that his "conversion" had not been determined mainly by spiritual motives: "If I could have got five or six marks a year to keep me in the schools, I should never have been monk or abbot"<sup>1</sup>. The contemporary historian Rigord implies the same of himself.

Hermann, abbot of St Martin's at Tournai, a generation earlier than Samson and Rigord, contrasted the spirit reigning under the saintly restorer of that monastery with the spirit of his own day.

Although this abbot Odo laid [upon the postulants] such hard and insupportable burdens, yet, marvellous to relate, many more came there to conversion in our monastery, both knights and clerks, than we see coming to us in these days when we have ceased to prove them—nay, when we coax them with many blandishments and promises to join us<sup>2</sup>.

In these circumstances, we need not be surprised to find that, even in an otherwise prosperous province like Normandy, many small priories were practically extinct when Odo Rigaldi came to visit them in 1248 and succeeding years. Normandy, it is true, had suffered from war, but so had other provinces, and we can see that a large number of small priories, mostly cells dependent on the greater houses, had ceased before the end of the twelfth century to be cloisters in anything but name, while some were no longer even nominally monastic abodes. Not only might a single house die out like this, but even a whole congregation, as Dom Berlière has shown in the case of Chalais<sup>3</sup>. It was

<sup>1</sup> Jocelin of Brakelond, C.S. p. 27, ed. Clarke, p. 46. Compare the parallel and nearly contemporary cases of two other monks who became heads of great houses, in vol. I of the present work, pp. 348-9. Equally significant is the large number of capable abbots who weary of their task and retire: Berlière, writing of the years 1198-1216, notes "ces nombreuses dépositions et démissions d'abbés qu'on relève dans les annales monastiques de cette époque" (*Inn. III*, p. 152).

<sup>2</sup> *De Smet*, vol. II, p. 549; Migne, P.L. vol. 180, col. 91; cf. Luchaire, *Social Life*, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> *Revue bénédictine*, vol. 31 (1914-19), pp. 402 ff.



founded in 1110; the Congregation consisted of about a dozen monasteries in the Grenoble district; in 1230 the whole congregation was reduced to 12 monks and 14 lay brethren; in 1303 the mother-house itself was absorbed by the Grande Chartreuse; but by this time, only one or two at most survived; all the rest had died or been absorbed earlier than Chalais.

Therefore even a fundamentally religious mind like Samson's could regard the cloister, at the moment of his choice, mainly as a club which offered literary opportunities. It was Samson's contemporary, Peter of Blois, who borrowed from St Jerome that sentence which Langland has put into unforgettable words:

For if there be heaven upon this earth, and ease to any soul,  
It is in cloister or in school<sup>1</sup>.

And, if to Samson it might be a literary club, for others it had other and very different club-advantages. The wealthy monasteries became dumping-grounds for younger sons and daughters of the nobility. It is true that Benedictinism preserved something of the democratic spirit of the early Church; but this has been very much exaggerated. The abbot was elected by his monks, but under the influence—and, sometimes, under the veto or the specific command—of the king or other founder's heir: witness the famous election-story in Jocelin of Brakelond<sup>2</sup>. It was indeed possible for a man of lowly birth to rise high in a monastery, but this was exceptional, even beyond the fact that it was very exceptional for a peasant or serf to obtain admittance at all, unless it were as a lay-brother<sup>3</sup>. A St-Gall chronicler could vaunt of the late ninth century that the monas-

<sup>1</sup> B. x, 300. Peter of Blois, *Ep. XIII, ad fin.*

<sup>2</sup> See also the list of unworthy elections between 1216 and 1227 in Berlière, *Honorius*, p. 263.

<sup>3</sup> Here and there it is recorded of a specially saintly abbot (such as St William of Dijon and St Bernard of Tiron) that he was actually willing to admit postulants of *all* classes; the very emphasis tells its own tale. The monks of Worcester, in 1323, had an applicant "commended for his learning and his character," but did not receive him until the precentor of Glastonbury had testified that he had not (as had been reported) a serf for his father. There is no suggestion that the man himself was still a serf; the mere fact of his learning is very strong presumptive evidence against this. This aristocratic tendency was even stronger, if possible, in the France of 1789; see Wallon, p. 71. When Sée (p. 256) speaks of occasional recruitment of Religious from among the serfs, the only instances he gives are concerned not with regular but with secular clergy: he seems to have neglected this essential distinction.

tery had never admitted any but freemen, and a twelfth-century poet records a similar boast: "Son of villein shall never be in my cloister"<sup>1</sup>. Popes were influenced by a monk's social condition; here is quite a typical entry from the Calendar of Papal Letters (vol. ix, p. 272, 1442 A.D.): "To Robert Venables, a Benedictine monk of St Werburgh's, Chester, in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield. Dispensation to him, who is of noble race, to receive and hold for life a benefice with cure only etc." This dispensation was in contradiction to canon law, but Robert was of noble race. Not only are these English Calendars full of such cases, but they are numerous in these petitions to the pope which Denifle printed in vol. i of his *Désolation des Églises*; whenever the monastic petitioner can plead nobility as an excuse for the favour he demands, he never fails to do so. Bishops, again, distinguished between noble and commoner within the monastic precincts. I have quoted an instance in *History* for April 1924, p. 4, and on pp. 23, 33 of *Monastic Schools*. General Chapters made similar social distinctions; for that of Cluny in 1200 I may refer again to *History*, pp. 3, 4, and this may be reinforced by a similar quotation from the later acts of the English Augustinian General Chapter<sup>2</sup>. The authorities have heard that there are quarrels in certain houses over precedence in choir-stalls; they decree that the ordinary rule (*i.e.* precedence according to priority of date of entrance into the monastery) be broken

if any of eminent learning or more noble race, or of those who have dealt liberally with their goods [to the monastery] in the case permitted by law, should enter Religion, then let it be left to the Superior's discretion to assign their place, when he has taken advice of the elder brethren.

About 1380, Bishop Hatfield of Durham founded a college at Oxford for eight monks: by his Ordinance,

the monastic students of Theology and Arts were placed in the position of what would afterwards have been called Fellows or full

<sup>1</sup> Berlière, *Recrutement*, pp. 16, 21; Ekkehard, *Casus S. Galli* in *M.G.H.* vol. II, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. H. E. Salter, *Cant. and York Soc.* vol. xxix, p. 9 (Chapter of Leicester in 1276). Compare, in Chapter XIII of this present volume, the allowance made by Dominican Chapters General for noble ladies: also a similar indulgence even on the part of the strict Franciscan Pecham in the Coxford case (*Norfolk Archaeol.* vol. xvii, p. 321).

members of the Society: the secular [clerical] students of Arts and Grammar, who held their places for 7 years only, waited upon the Fellows, sat at a second table with the servants, and were in fact mere servitors of the lordly monks of Durham<sup>1</sup>.

The modern contention that feudalism was free from snobbery will not bear serious examination. I have pointed out elsewhere how, for instance, the exclusive seat in church dates from at least as early as 1195; and anyone who takes the trouble to analyse any great collection of lives of saints will be startled to find how overwhelming is the majority of the upper social classes among those to whom the Romans pray<sup>2</sup>. And the monks, in the feudal system, were of the upper social classes, when not by birth, then at least by dignity. Giraldus Cambrensis devotes three pages to the monastic snobs who looked down upon the rest of the clergy<sup>3</sup>. Stray survivals from account-books show us monks as frequent guests in great people's houses; *e.g.* the prior of Chepstow dines in London with Bogo de Clare; at Goodrich lady Joan of Valence entertains the prior of Monmouth, the prioress of Acombury, the prior of Merton<sup>4</sup>. They also show us frequent entertainments of minstrels, players, choruses of village girls, etc. I quote Norwich as a typical great monastery, because Mr H. W. Saunders has kindly supplied me with notices from the surviving unprinted rolls. These become frequent only with the early fourteenth century; then we find an average expenditure in the *camera* roll of about £1 on this account, which must be multiplied by at least 15 to bring it to pre-war standard. By the latter part of the century, this has risen to about £1. 10s.; other departmental rolls swell this by about 2s. 6d. The minstrels of the earl of Suffolk attended regularly from 1366 to 1378, and there is frequent reference to the *ministri* of the prince, who are elsewhere called players. The players of other great lords attended also; those of the king, Sir Hugh Daudell (?), the duke of Lancaster, Lord Bardolf, the bishop, and "the Earl." Of private entertainment there are two

<sup>1</sup> Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. II, p. 478.

<sup>2</sup> *The Medieval Village*, ch. xx and Appendix 32.

<sup>3</sup> *Opp.* R.S. vol. IV, pp. 82-4.

<sup>4</sup> *Journ. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.* vol. XVIII (1862), pp. 70, 217-18. Compare also vol. XIX (1863), p. 182. There are similar indications in Smyth's *Lives of the Berkeleys*.

entries: "1328. Players when the bailiffs ate with the Prior, 10s....1354. In wine and other expenses among the singers at the Prior's feast, 6s. 4d." The village chorus comes among the items in the accounts of Prior Moore of Worcester, in the sixteenth century: it may be found in Noake on p. 159.

Much of this was pleasant, and even beneficent, but it was the beneficence of a feudal capitalist. Littré writes very truly: "Feudalism spread everywhere, and everywhere the feudal monastery thrust itself forward"<sup>1</sup>. And sometimes it was very pushing indeed, especially among those who had begun with least pretence to feudal lordliness. About 1190, the abbot of Ste-Geneviève, Stephen of Tournai, complained to the archbishop of Reims concerning the encroachments of the Cistercians of Longpont: "I believe, Father, that the monks of Cîteaux are of the number of those who take the Kingdom of Heaven by force; but I have not yet found in the Scriptures that they have licence to take the earth by force"<sup>2</sup>. A century later, Archbishop Pecham complained of them in very similar language: "They are the hardest neighbours that prelates or parsons can have; for wheresoever they set foot, they destroy villages, take away tithes, and frustrate by their privileges the whole power of the prelacy"<sup>3</sup>. Stephen's contemporary, Pope Alexander III, in a bull which is incorporated in Canon Law, expressed his grief that so many of the Cistercians had outgrown their original simplicity, and no longer gave to the layfolk an example of holy poverty<sup>4</sup>. The historian of Loos speaks in strong terms of the ravages committed by the numerous monastic herds of swine on their neighbours' lands: "aussi les habitants de l'abbaye y furent bientôt détestés," and the numbers of swine in 1250 were restricted to 120<sup>5</sup>. Equally symptomatic is the growing discord between the monks and their lay-brethren; the

<sup>1</sup> *Étude sur les barbares et le moyen âge*, 4th ed., 1883, p. 175; cf. pp. 184, 212, 373.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 211, col. 351.

<sup>3</sup> *Reg. Epp.* R.S. p. 726. For this destruction, see *The Medieval Village*, p. 224.

<sup>4</sup> *Decret. Greg.* lib. III, tit. xxxv, c. 3, *Recolentes*. For other testimonies see Humbert de Romans in *Bib. Max. Pat.* vol. xxv, p. 464; F. Winter, *Cisterzienser*, u.s.w. vol. III, pp. 1-32; J. V. Leclerc's and E. Renan's introductory *Discours* to the fourteenth century (2nd ed. Michel Lévy, 1865), vol. I, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> de Rosny, p. 36.

rift widened rapidly between the actual worker and the *Dominus*<sup>1</sup>; these revolts have left their mark on the Cistercian General Chapter records. The revolt of the lay-brethren in the Order of Grammont is one of the most remarkable chapters in monastic history; it may be read, for instance, in Hélyot, or in the editor's preface to Stephen of Tournai (P.L. vol. 211, col. 299). F. Winter, who speaks very plainly of Cistercian commercialism, notes a similar decline in the contemporary reform of Prémontré; the quarrels between choir-brethren and lay-brethren came to ex-communication and threats of murder and arson<sup>2</sup>. Guiot de Provins, in the thirteenth century, had already commented on the rapid transformations of this latter Order: "It was formerly of much and great renown; but within a short time these [Premonstratensians] have gone to ruin"<sup>3</sup>. For those causes were steadily at work which I have enumerated in pp. 347 ff. of my first volume, to bring into the monasteries a large proportion, and in some places a large majority, of persons with no real religious vocation. Master Onulf of Speier, himself a monk of the eleventh century, gives much the same catalogue of causes which Caesarius gave for a few generations later:

many [take the vows] because they have chosen rather to lead a quiet life with the brethren, since they were constrained until then by many necessities in the world. And by what necessities? Oppressed by the violence of more powerful folk, constrained by want of worldly goods, entangled in very grievous debts, fleeing from enemies who lie in wait for them, suffering long and grievously from sickness, fearing the imminent bitterness of death, how could they escape these things? They take the vow of holy life, put on the frock, and avoid the perils of earthly need. Why so? Because, to all alike of those who profess common life in the cloister, all necessities both in food and in raiment are distributed. Why then do they not persevere in the obedience which they have undertaken? Because they are infected by an evil mind and heart; because their earlier habits have become almost second nature, and draw them backwards as

<sup>1</sup> This distinction of title is kept up, for instance, at the Cistercian abbey of Maulbronn, now a Protestant seminary. The old buildings are almost perfect; there is the lay-brothers' refectory and, quite apart, as at Fountains and elsewhere, the "Herren-refectory." Lay-brethren and choir-brethren came sometimes to actual blows, and the system finally broke down; in the later Middle Ages, the granges were let out as farms (Rosny, p. 52).

<sup>2</sup> *Die Prämonstratenser des 12ten Jhdts*, Berlin, 1865, pp. 267 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Bible*, l. 1585. Here also the lay-brethren revolted against the choir-brethren; see Winter, p. 277.

with a chain. What, then, of those who have been fostered from their infancy in claustral discipline? Even these also are oftentimes hurried into rash deeds by inexperience of life and fatal ambition. Why? Because they count those things sweet and pleasant, whereof they know not the last and bitter end<sup>1</sup>.

But perhaps the root cause of Benedictine decay, and certainly one of the main factors which contributed to this tendency towards feudalism and capitalism, was the fact, already alluded to, that the cloister was constantly abused as a dumping-ground for portionless children of good families. Many modern monographs, in which the authors work from the actual medieval records of this or that monastery, bring out this significant fact<sup>2</sup>. But these scattered indications, and others which I had separately collected, are now rendered superfluous by the exhaustive paper of Dom Ursmer Berlière, read before the Belgian Academy, on *Le recrutement dans les monastères bénédictins aux XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles*<sup>3</sup>. In this monograph of 66 pages, Dom Berlière has exploited all kinds of sources, and a few quotations may suffice here.

William of Auvergne [bishop of Paris 1228-48] is indignant at the anxiety of families to cast their children into the cloister, with the confessed object "that they may be dead to the world; to wit, that they may lose their share of the inheritance, which will thus fall to those who remain in the world." Many are the complaints of deformed or incapable children thrust upon the monasteries; especially noblemen's bastards or children below the age of discretion whom men want to get rid of cheaply... Do we not read in a visitation of the Cluniac priory of Domène, in 1303, that the former prior, pressed for money, had received as "conversus," for the sum of 40 livres, a blind child less than ten years old, because he was known to be incapable of earning his living? and do we not find a child of nine forced at his parents' demand, by papal letters, among

<sup>1</sup> *Magister Onulf v. Speier*, in *Sitzungsberichte d. k. preussischen Akad. d. Wiss.* 1894, p. 372; cf. pp. 365-7. "In the northern parts [of England]," wrote Archbishop Pecham two centuries later in a business letter, "murderers, after their crime, betake themselves as converts to the great abbeys of Cistercians and are safe" (*Epp.* p. 968; cf. p. 995).

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.* Belbuck, p. 41, Guigne, p. 429, Marquiset, p. 53; J. Nider, *De Ref. Religiosorum*, Antwerp, 1611, pp. 48, 272; Duckett, *Visns. and Chaps. General of Cluni*, p. 304; Benedict XII in Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. II, p. 606; Luchaire, *Social Life*, pp. 211, 223; Eileen Power, *Nunneries*, pp. 3 ff., 12 ff., 73-4, 194, 212, 255, 324, 503.

<sup>3</sup> Acad. Roy. de Belgique, Classe des lettres, *Mémoires in-8°*, t. XVIII, fasc. 6 (1924).

the directors of the hospital of Grammont?... The admission of illiterates lowered the moral level of monasteries... The complaints against forced receptions of children and idiots, and useless and ignorant folk, formulated in 1252 by the chapter of Mayence, find an echo in several abbeys... But the abuses continued; and, so late as September 1391, a capitular decision of the abbey of Moyenmoutier stipulates that, for the next three years, each monk may choose a novice and admit him to a prebend, provided that (as the statutes of the monastery demand) he be of noble family and at least ten years old.

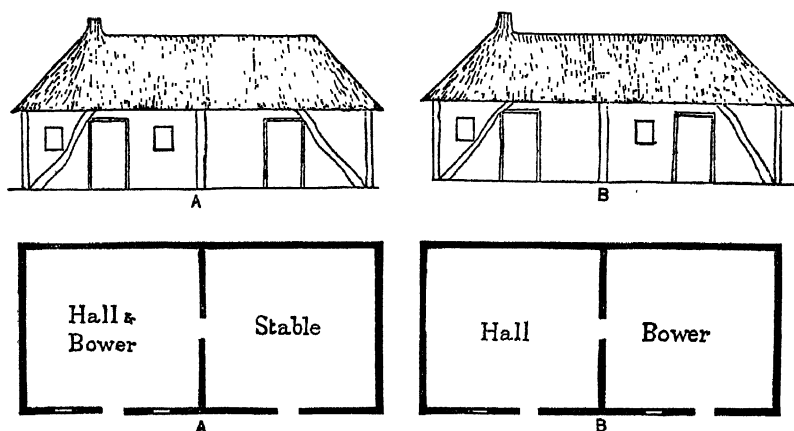
Berlière then fills five pages (16-21) with a list of medieval abbeys which were reserved for sons and daughters of the nobility; and he adds:

When, from the twelfth century onwards, the free nobles were decimated, they were obliged to yield part of this booty to the lower nobles, the *ministeriales*; vocations became rare. Or indeed we can scarcely speak of *vocation*, where the only quality needed is the quarters of nobility, and not the call of God or any aptitude for claustral life.

Especially, princes and nobles sent their bastards into the cloister; "this set a premium upon immorality in high places." Even "a pope so careful as Innocent III to keep the rules of Church law did not scruple to grant a certain number [of dispensations for illegitimacy]," and it was precisely these noble illegitimates who were often promoted in chapter or in cloister (p. 27). To these "vocations" we must add the occasional use of the monastery as a prison for criminals, and of the nunnery for fallen women (p. 42). Thus, for multiple reasons, we get a large number of forced vocations; some of these may have turned out well, but a very large number necessarily turned ill: "that was one of the causes of religious decay in the Middle Ages, as it was also in less remote times" (p. 45). "All these defective vocations, provoked by family ambitions, or love of gain, or the struggle for comfort, brought about a complete decay of religious life in a great part of Christendom; and the scandals were all the more terrible because they were covered with the veil of religion" (p. 25).

A system of this kind was not likely to breed real sympathy between the monk and the peasant, between the owner and the worker. Even St Thomas Aquinas, after St Francis had shown

the better way, did not shrink from philosophizing over the peasant in the mood of Aristotle, rather than in that of the Bible. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Politics*, he agrees that the model state is one in which the labourers on the land are strong of arm, dull of intellect, and divided from each other by mutual distrust, so that they may give less trouble to their masters<sup>1</sup>. And, the wider this rift grew, the more risk there was of a consequence which widened it still farther; men who neither worked much themselves nor sympathized closely with the actual worker were doomed, sooner or later, to almost inevitable



English peasant's Cottage of thirteenth century

failure in business. That indebtedness of the monasteries, which was notable already in the early thirteenth century, had begun much earlier. Onulf (p. 377) describes, as a phenomenon only too painfully familiar, the spendthrift and wasteful abbots who break the crust [of gold or silver] from the very relics, flay the ornaments, scatter the conventual treasury to the winds; I say nothing of their vain waste of wine and corn, their distribution of the brethren's other necessities, the usurious interest which they pay to the detriment of the common fund; I pass over—for it is well to pass over common things—that they sell and pawn vineyards and fields and other revenues, that they scrape gifts together from every

<sup>1</sup> Lib. vii, lect. viii (ed. Parma, vol. xxi, p. 662). In ch. xviii of *The Medieval Village* I give evidence for this as the usual monastic—and, indeed, the usual ecclesiastical—point of view.



source to bestow upon play-actors and upon the hounds that haunt their palaces.

And Stephen of Tournai, himself an abbot and chosen as one of the commissioners to settle the great quarrel between choir-brethren and lay-brethren in the Order of Grammont, gives us in one of his letters a concrete image of such a monastery as Onulf is referring to. He writes:

We came to the priory of Brandenay to hold our synod, and forthwith a great marvel met our eyes—sad to us, and a mockery to others. We heard from the neighbours that the Rule was kept conventually, with 12 brethren, that divine service was regularly celebrated, with food for the poor, hospitality to strangers, and solace to the sick. But behold! all is turned to the contrary; the buildings are ruined, divine service is silent, with not a single monk to celebrate it. The place is become a wilderness, as a cottage in a vineyard and a lodge in a garden of cucumbers. The ample possessions and fat tithes which nourished the monks are partly alienated, partly mortgaged to others; and the wretched church, like a maidservant, is committed to a single priest, instead of the prior and monks who should have governed it. The parishioners, from whose gifts and from the oblations of whose predecessors the priory was founded and endowed, complain and grieve; they bewail and cry in the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth, demanding and awaiting God's vengeance and your correction<sup>1</sup>.

Nobody can read far in original monastic records without coming across examples of this kind. Generally it is just a detached notice, difficult to pursue farther; but, here and there, some fuller collection of documents enables us to trace the whole downward path. Here, for instance, is the story of the abbey of Camajore near Lucca<sup>2</sup>. In 1239, Gregory IX annexed to this abbey the possessions of the nunnery of Valle Benedetta, wherein "all the nuns were illiterate, and they had dissipated almost all the ecclesiastical substance of their monastery, so that they had not even books for divine service and they had utterly cast off

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 211, col. 482. This subject will be found more fully treated in my next volume; and in ch. v of Mr R. H. Snape's *English Monastic Finances*. For a formidable list of bankrupt or decadent houses recorded in the single source of Honorius III's register (1216-27) see Berlière, *Honorius*, pp. 253-63.

<sup>2</sup> F. Buonanoma, *Indice di Documenti inediti risguardanti la badia di S. Pietro in Camajore* (Lucca, Giusti, 1858), pp. 7-9, 17, 22, 36, 38, 47, 62, 65, 70.

the yoke of monastic discipline, to say nothing of many other things"—*ut de multis aliis taceamus*. In this dependent cell, writes Gregory, the abbot of Camajore must always keep a prior with three or four monks. Yet by 1334 the monastery of Camajore itself has only five monks besides the abbot; in 1339 only three; in 1369 one is "vagabond"; in 1371 there are only two; in 1381 the abbot has not a single monk "by reason of the plague"; in 1402 the community consists of abbot and prior only. In 1434 there was not a soul left; the estates were being administered by a commission "in default of abbot, prior or monks." In 1464 they passed to a cardinal who held them *in commendam*. In 1532 they were formally transferred to a hospital in Lucca, under condition of maintaining the fabric of the Church and keeping a chaplain who would celebrate a daily mass—instead of the many masses to which all monasteries were pledged by their endowments. The same monograph shows how, in 1405, five smaller monasteries were swallowed up by two newly-reformed houses (p. 95). The number of monasteries which disappeared altogether during the Middle Ages is very great.

## CHAPTER V

### MONK AND PEASANT

THE cloisterer of 1200, therefore, was far removed from St Jerome's ideal monk, who was intangible by adverse human laws because he lived in the spirit; who could not be driven forth from his abode, since the whole world was his home<sup>1</sup>. To argue from St Boniface and his struggling pioneers, for instance, to the endowed monks of later times, is almost as fatal an anachronism as to confuse the life of the modern Bostonian with that of his backwoodsman ancestors. We may therefore proceed now to consider more closely the relation of the monastic landlord to his humbler tenants and dependents. I need not give many references in this chapter, since it does but summarize what I have tried to describe from the surviving documents in *The Medieval Village*.

Though money was scarce in the Middle Ages, yet it had at least as much power as at the present day; just as the average modern French peasant thinks quite as much of money as the average dollar-magnate. In the medieval law-court, especially, money had more influence than in any civilized country of today. Social rank, also, had far greater influence then; and then it was also far more often combined with the extremes of wealth. Lord Acton puts the matter into a sentence with which other first-rate historians have expressed virtual agreement: "Medieval liberty differs from modern in this, that it depended on property"<sup>2</sup>. The medieval tenant, therefore, even if he were a freeman, had far less power as against his landlord than his modern descendant; and, at the heyday of monasticism, freemen were still in the minority in England or Scotland, and in some other countries of Europe. The rest were "bondmen," "serfs," "villeins," at a stage intermediate between slavery and freedom. The serf was a chattel, "an economic unit." He could be sold,

<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* LXXXII; P.L. vol. 22, col. 742.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, ed. Figgis and Laurence (1917), p. 272. F. W. Maitland says practically the same in *Select Pleas of Manorial Courts*, p. xx.

with or without his little holding; he could be exchanged or pawned like any other chattel. The lawyers of the later twelfth century are still asserting a principle which had originally been undisputed, that the serf could possess nothing of his own; both his body and his savings, his "peculium," belonged in strict right to his lord. In practice, this was very considerably modified by 1200; yet the theory preserved enough vitality to legalize extortions here and there, even under Elizabeth. As the serf's body was not his own, neither was his "brood," his *sequela*, for in his case the ordinary word *family* was seldom used. If he and his wife belonged to different lords, these frequently divided the children between them. For the same economic reasons, neither bondman nor bondwoman was free to marry; by the custom called *merchet* in English, and in French *formariage*, they must "buy their own blood," as the lawyers phrase it; they must pay the lord a fine in any case, and an added fine if, by taking their partner from another manor, they thus far diminish the prospective stock of labour on their own. Nobody looked forward to the probable results of this breeding in and in; again, it mattered little that the Church forbade all marriages within seven degrees of affinity—or, by the milder law of 1215, within four degrees; that is, between all couples who had a common great-great-grandfather. Considering that the average population of a medieval village in England, including infants, was certainly under 400 and more probably about 200 souls<sup>1</sup>, it must have been very difficult for the peasant to observe this law within his own manor; for the village itself might be cut up into two or three manors. If it had been possible, and pecuniarily profitable, to search all these pedigrees carefully, it would probably have been found that a large proportion had married within the degrees prohibited even by the laxer law; and nothing but a papal indulgence could have legitimated their offspring; so clearly did economic and religious motives conflict in this matter, and so complete was the economic victory. From this, it was by quite a logical extension that the lord would often claim the right not only of forbidding marriages but of making

<sup>1</sup> In the diocese of Lausanne, now one of the most prosperous agricultural districts in Europe, and then quite up to the average, the population of the villages in 1416-17 averaged just about 200 souls. See the last pages of Appendix 40 in *The Medieval Village*.

them; why should his economic units remain barren, while they might increase and multiply? On a manor near Bâle, the bailiff yearly chose couples and mated them, as if they had been oxen; the monks of St Albans and of Halesowen habitually prescribed to such and such labourers that they should take such and such widows under pain of fine; it was obviously uneconomic to allow the woman to manage her holding alone, while there were bachelors about.

One of the most odious dues, and certainly the most onerous if we except the cases where the right of "tallage at will" was literally enforced, was the so-called "heriot." There was, in a sense, a good historical reason for it; it had been the her-geat, the martial equipment which the lord had supplied to his tenant to fight with, and which he reclaimed at the man's death, to lend it to another. But this time was long past; and the peasant of 1200 (or, indeed, his lord) knew no more of the original historical justification than the shoplifter of 1800 knew of the excellent historical precedents (as apart from moral or social pleas) in favour of his execution on the gallows. To the peasant of all the later medieval centuries, the heriot seemed a conspiracy between unfeeling nature and the cruelty of man. When death struck the man down, and his widow and children were in their sorest need, the lord might claim his best beast or other possession, and (in most cases) the parson his second-best.

For such was the custom; and, in these primitive communities, custom regulated everything. Theoretically, the usage was declared and interpreted by the peasants themselves in their lord's court; but, practically, everything was done under very considerable pressure from the lord and his officials. This word is most legitimately used in the plural, since, although in theory the reeve was a representative of the people's interests, yet generally his actual interest was to obey the lord; and Chaucer only follows the ordinary custom of the time in thinking of him as the lord's man. But custom is essentially more uncertain than law; and, even when (about our period) the manorial usages were commonly committed to writing, these documents were brief, ill-drafted, full of lacunae which baffle the modern searcher and must have left much latitude of verbal interpretation even in their own day; an inference which is amply borne

out by the numerous recorded quarrels. For nothing is more unbusiness-like than an avoidable uncertainty; more than half the quarrels of ordinary life are simply misunderstandings, at least in their first stage. Medieval measures were uncertain even where royalty tried to fix a standard; a pound, a tun, a hundred, meant very different things according to the difference of locality or of the commodity measured. On the manor, there were many other measures in comparison with which even these variations sink into insignificance; not only in England, but still more in some continental districts, they would seem deliberately to encourage what may be called the Sporting Chance, as if they had been designed on the principle of a bodily struggle between the interested parties, and a survival of the fittest. In England, a peasant's allowance of hay might depend entirely on the question whether his hayband had burst with the load an inch inside or an inch outside the farmyard; his sheaf of corn was forfeited if it did not fulfil an even more risky measurement. But, in Germany, his right to move from manor to manor was sometimes made dependent upon a bodily struggle between him and the bailiff; he might poach wood from the lord's forests so long as he could carry it a certain distance without being caught. There were variant customs, and corresponding chances of disagreement, as to which party, lord or peasant, should bear the disadvantage of a rainy day, of a Church holy-day with its prohibition of labour, or of the worker's sickness. In some cases, the decision rested upon the reception of Extreme Unction by the sufferer; in others, the sick man must put on his Sunday clothes unaided, and walk unaided a certain number of steps beyond his own door. When we remember also that rents and wages were constantly paid in kind or in days of work, that there might be all the difference in the world between one hundred and another of the Easter eggs paid to the lord, or between one and another of the herrings dealt out by the bailiff for the worker's dinner, or between the forced ploughing of two different peasants, or between the same peasant on one day with a free mind, and on another when he knew every minute that his own crops were suffering for want of a day's work just at the right moment—when we remember all these things, we shall be prepared to find that these manorial records are even richer in quarrels than

would be the case with similar records today. The monks of Ramsey were not exceptional in keeping a foreman with a rod to hold over the reapers at their work; on the contrary, there are many other such records, and the overseer's rod was an ordinary phenomenon in the harvest-field.

There were many other conditions which, natural enough for that day, and marking a definite advance from mere agricultural anarchy, did nevertheless work with very heavy friction, and cannot be seriously regretted even by the antiquary. In many cases, it had doubtless been a boon at first that the lord should build a common mill and a common oven, nor did men need compulsion to use these things; but, as culture advanced, the boon faded away in face of what was now a burdensome monopoly. Similar "bans" of beer and wine, though they may have had some good effect in regulating the traffic, were managed in the lord's interest on such nakedly commercial principles that they were felt only as a burden. Far more burdensome was the lord's game-monopoly and game-preserving; medieval moralists had ample justification for their complaint that the lord often cared more for his wild beasts than for his men. The peasant ran heavy risks in killing these ravagers of his crops; in Germany, he might not even drive the lord's bull or boar out of his corn except with a switch; and, even thus, he simply transferred the beast to his neighbour. Among the heaviest burdens of the peasant, at least in earlier times, were those "gifts" which had perhaps once been more or less voluntary, but which custom had crystallized into a law. Similar were the "tallages," often "at will," which reposed on the theory of the serf's property belonging to his lord; the latter could therefore demand a contribution, "tallage" him, whenever he chose. This system, even under its considerable later limitations, was often bitterly resented.

With all this, manorial records show a great deal of paternal discipline in the village. Everything was regulated by fines; these went into the lord's pocket, leaving a sadder and a wiser peasant<sup>1</sup>. Quarrels are fined, and assaults and trespasses and

<sup>1</sup> "Le droit de justice sur les serfs, qui est la suite du droit de correction, est devenu [dans le haut moyen âge] une mode d'exploitation de la classe servile.... La justice a perdu le sens élevé, qu'on lui trouve à l'époque carolingienne, pour devenir une source de revenus" (Jeanton, p. 49).

defilement of the village spring or the digging of claypits in the line of the highroad; unmarried mothers pay a fine, either directly or through their parents, for their unchastity is "to the damage of the lord," if only because the archdeacon also has a right to fine the culprit, and money is thus taken from the manor. Rough games which lead to fighting, such as football, are forbidden and fined; even the village dance is discouraged in proportion as the monastic landlord is himself a strict and earnest Christian. Sabbatarianism, in theory, was far stricter in the Middle Ages than is often realized even by professional historians<sup>1</sup>. In practice, of course, the peasant constantly rebelled against this; but he was told that he thereby risked his soul. The dance, if we may judge from the large amount that was written and preached about it, was the main bone of contention. I have already touched upon this in my first volume (Appendix 23); the contradiction which this aroused calls for farther evidence here. Neither have I discovered, nor have my critics discovered for me, a single medieval churchman who frankly approves of the village dance, while the majority write either with strong disapproval or with something like absolute condemnation. One of the fullest and most learned of these churchmen was the Carthusian Dionysius Rickel (1402-71), whose great Bible commentary in seven folio volumes was published in 1530 as a bulwark against Lutheranism. Dionysius twice treats of the dance at some length; once to the extent of four quarto pages<sup>2</sup>. The whole treatise might pass for the work of one of the severest of seventeenth-century Puritans. He quotes Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas and the *Summa Pisana* as admitting that human beings need a certain amount of relaxation, and that even the dance may be lawful under certain specified conditions, but he adds: "Since therefore those [required conditions] are very seldom or never kept in dances, it is certain that dances are very seldom or never done without sin." He, like many of his predecessors, quotes Augustine as saying that it is less sinful for the peasant to break the Sabbath by digging or ploughing on Sundays than by dancing. Yet, in

<sup>1</sup> B. L. Manning, *The People's Faith in the Time of Wyclif*, pp. 123 ff.; *The Medieval Village*, pp. 255, 272 and Appendix 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Summa de Vitiis et Virtutibus*, artt. 80-1, *Opp.* xxxix, pp. 140 ff.



spite of the heavy battery of texts and scholastic arguments which he brings against this pernicious practice, he admits the frequent inefficacy of all this against the ingrained prejudices of the peasant mind:

Some folk take so incorrigible a delight [in dances], that, when men preach against them, they say in deed, if not in words: "Depart from us; we will not hear the knowledge of God's ways and the teaching of our salvation, but we will steadily follow along the way of dancing, which leadeth to hell." O, of what sort is the penitence and confession and communion of these folk, who confess and communicate about the feast of Easter, and then, on the octave of Easter, or a little after, begin their dances again!

Most startling of all, perhaps, is the attitude of Petrarch, from whom we might have expected something like the modern artistic standpoint here. Yet, far as the poet of Laura falls, in his prose discourse, below modern appreciation of womankind in general, his view of the dance is even more deeply tinged with medieval Puritanism<sup>1</sup>. Joy, Hope, and Reason are the interlocutors in his book, and Reason argues: "From singing, we do receive some sweetness, and oftentimes a holy and profitable sweetness; but from dances we get nothing but a libidinous and empty spectacle, hateful to honest eyes and unworthy of a man." But, protests Joy, "I do get a certain sweetness from dances." To which Reason retorts: "O laughable sweetness! Feign to thyself that thou seest a dance without hearing the piper, so that silly women, and men more effeminate than women, are turning round in silence, moving backwards and forwards, playing the fool [*ineptire*]; what, pray, did you ever see more absurd or crazy than this?" Joy persists: "I delight in dances"; whereupon Reason explains, in great and somewhat crude detail, that this delight is based, under analysis, upon conscious or unconscious sexual appetite; even when men dance alone with men, or women with women, this is only a rehearsal or prelude to the other.

Root out this ingenious and wicked expectation, take lust away, and you will have removed the dance also.... For the whole thing, in itself, is mere folly, begetting rather weariness than joy; for what on earth is there in these gyrations, beyond giddiness?... To this

<sup>1</sup> *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae*, l. i, dial. xxiv-xxxii (*Opp.* 1554, pp. 31 ff.).

we may most properly apply those words of Scripture: "The wicked walk round about"<sup>1</sup>. This sport hath brought many to shame; oftentimes hath the matron there lost the honour that she had kept so long;

so too with "the unhappy maiden." But, persists Joy, "I am glad to exercise myself in honest dances"<sup>2</sup>. Reason rejoins:

I would that you had chosen some other kind of exercise; but I see your aim and desire; you would have the prohibition removed, and permission given, and a limit prescribed. When therefore you are thus affected, whether this [dance] be a disease or a custom, than which there is nothing worse when it is bad, or better when it is good, this shall be your rule in all these things, that, when you cannot entirely renounce a thing, you should practise it with the greatest moderation and infrequency—*modestissime ac rarissime*—so that you never perform any business in a soft or womanish way, but that your manly vigour may be conspicuous even in other fields than its own; and so that this *tripudium*, or whatever the game may be, may prove a relaxation to your wearied intellect, an exercise to your body, and not a pleasure that enervates your mind. It is true that we have examples among the ancients; but not every bird can safely follow the flight of those Greek and Roman eagles. It is true that Seneca allows both *tripudium* and wine as relaxations, and even says that we may sometimes proceed even to intoxication, which, from the mouth of so rigid a moralist, moves me to wonder. If you will take my faithful counsel, drink wine sparingly and abstain from the *tripudium*; there are other more reputable [*honestiora*] kinds of relaxation, wherewith you may heal a flagging and tired mind... It is far better so to live that men may marvel at your abstinence and gravity, than that your friends may excuse your wantonness.

Poor Joy then pleads for tennis—*pilae ludus*; to which Reason answers:

Lo! here is another foolish sport [*ludibrium*] of shouting and leaping!...It would seem that you hate repose, and are always hawking after toil; would that it were decorous toil! For if sport be sought here for exercise, prithee, is it more decent to weary yourself in a furious casting to and fro, wherein the mind can do nothing, or would it not be better to take a quiet walk, wherein the limbs move

<sup>1</sup> "In circuitu iniqui ambulant," Ps. xi, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Here the word *chorea* changes to *tripudium*, "capering," which is a frequent medieval variant; it seems, however, to imply something rather like the morris-dance, as exemplified in Chaucer's clerk:

"In twenty manere koude he trippe and daunce,  
(After the Scole of Oxenfordē tho)  
And with his leggēs casten to and fro."

to some profitable purpose, and the intellect is honourably exercised? Would you rather follow the tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse, of whom we read that he was wont to delight in this troublous game, or the Stagyrite philosopher Aristotle, who enjoyed a studious walk? [It is true that great men enjoyed ball-play in ancient Rome; but, in spite of those brilliant precedents] we must not on that account choose a violent and clamorous game; since all more vehement motions, especially if they be mingled with clamour, are unworthy of an honourable mind.

To the theatre Petrarch is even more unfavourable; addiction to this is "unquestionably [a sign of] corrupt taste and false judgement." As to wrestling, "the onlooker wastes his time, the wrestler is a madman." The "various spectacles" of circus and amphitheatre are dishonourable in themselves, and it is dishonourable to frequent them (*Dial.* xxx). Even equitation is no proper exercise for a serious mind; as to hunting and hawking:

Nature gave you two hands, and you crook one to hold the reins while you surrender the other to a bird's claws.... [Those who aspire to a proper conduct of life] may often find in their books how Plato was busy with philosophy, Homer with poetry, Cicero with oratory, Caesar with triumphs; I doubt whether they will read that any of these were hunters.

We must make liberal allowance for the complacent exaggerations of an academic "high-brow," but, even so, Petrarch's attitude is most significant; it shows how the most advanced thinkers of the fourteenth century were still bound, in theory at least, by the puritanism of the official Church in this matter of popular, or even aristocratic, sports. English manorial records do not, like the German, reveal the landlord as joining hands with the priest to forbid or restrict dance on holy-days. But, even in England, there are many stray records which help to corroborate the professional moralist's evidence, and which show the average medieval peasant as alternating between hard work and disorderly enjoyment. Sundays and Church holy-days were specially marked by drunkenness, licence, and crime; I have met with no medieval writer on this subject who fails to tell the same melancholy tale. So general was this feeling, that we find great churchmen pleading, in the interests of decency and morality, for a reduction in the number of saints' days to

be observed. When Henry VIII, in 1536, reduced the number of holy-days on the ground that they were often spent in intemperance and riot, he was simply carrying into effect what some of the most pious and orthodox dignitaries in Christendom had been advocating for generations past. For the boisterous merriments of the holiday was a measure of the peasant's hard life and ungrateful labour at other times, and of his imperfect education. Though the school and the university were clerical monopolies, there never was anything even approaching to a general educational system, as I shall have to show in my next volume. In the very elements of religion, the scanty minimum prescribed by Church synods was seldom realized in fact<sup>1</sup>. The Franciscan Alvarus Pelagius, papal penitentiary, agrees with the Dominican St Antonino of Florence and with others before and after who speak more briefly. The peasants, writes Alvarus,

on Sundays hear not Mass fully, down to the priest's benediction, as they are bound by Church precept: nay, rather do they stay outside the church while the priest says his Mass, nor do they commonly enter but [just] to see the Lord's Body; and, even then, many enter not the church but see it from outside, where they talk of their oxen and beasts and other base matters, like bestial folk.

And Antonino:

On holy-days they spend little time in divine service or in hearing of the whole Mass, but in games, or in taverns and in contentions at the church-doors... They blaspheme God and His saints on slender provocation... Very many of them do not confess once a year; and far fewer are those who take the Communion, under the false belief that they need not communicate except when they grow old or are sick unto death<sup>2</sup>.

We have definite sidelights on this last statement. An episcopal visitation of the diocese of Lausanne, in 1416-17, gives the numbers of households, and of persons excommunicated for not having done their one statutory communion in the past year, for 220 parishes. The excommunicates amount to considerably over 6 per cent. of the households; and a similar register for the

<sup>1</sup> I brought this out some years ago in the 7th of *Medieval Studies*; it is far more fully set forth, and supported by far more documentary evidence, in ch. i of Dr G. R. Owst's *Preaching in Medieval England*.

<sup>2</sup> The passages are printed in full, with others of the kind from about 1130 to 1490, in *The Medieval Village*, pp. 242-7 and Appendix 31.

Cerisy district in Normandy suggests an average of about 10 per cent.<sup>1</sup> With this, there were many survivals of paganism among the people, often covered with a thin veneer of ecclesiastical orthodoxy, as when bells were rung and holy-water sprinkled against the approaching storm, or caterpillars and other rural pests were "excommunicated" with elaborate priestly ceremony.

Therefore, although the peasant did fight his way, by the middle of the fifteenth century, to a far better position than he held in 1200, yet, when all things are considered, he was not in an enviable position even then. With regard to the simplest necessities of life, he may have been as well off in 1450 as he has been at any time until quite modern days; and certainly a large proportion of the peasantry had better food than they have sometimes enjoyed in later times. But his political and social disabilities, his want of education and the scorn of other classes, went far to counterbalance this. "Villein," "serf," "rusticus," were stock terms of reproach; he was, as Lamprecht puts it, "the pariah of society"<sup>2</sup>. It is one of the most democratic and sympathetic of the Franciscan preachers of the Middle Ages who pronounces that word, terrible to pious ears of his day: "Scarce one from among you [rustics and artisans] is sainted; I say not 'is saved,' but 'is canonized,' has his feast kept as a holy-day." On the other hand, it is among them that heresies chiefly flourish<sup>3</sup>. And all this applied with especial force to the serf. There is no doubt that, on the whole, the Church was definitely on the lord's side. We have already seen how Aquinas would have kept the peasants down; quite similar is his attitude towards serfdom; here, again, his philosophy follows not the milder suggestions which he might have drawn from early Christian egalitarianism, but the harder lines of Aristotle's economic theory; liberty is, indeed, everyman's birthright by natural law, but history and custom have overruled this, and servitude is socially and economically defensible in human

<sup>1</sup> *The Medieval Village*, p. 335 and Appendix 40, *ad fin.*

<sup>2</sup> By the customs of the town of Cluny, written down in 1172, if any townsman called another *thief, serf, stinkard, perjurer, leper* or *traitor*, he was fined six sols (Pignot, vol. II, p. 481); for other similar evidence see *The Medieval Village*, pp. 91, 333.

<sup>3</sup> A. Schönbach, *Studien z. Gesch. d. altdeutschen Predigt*, VIII (Vienna, 1907), p. 53.

society as at present constituted. Wyclif, I believe, is the only medieval philosopher who expressly refuses to justify serfdom in theory. It has been asserted, again, with a boldness which has no excuse since the studies of Fournier and Brecht, that the gradual mitigation and the final extinction of servitude were mainly due to the Church, and especially to the monks. One of St Gregory's letters is quoted in favour of this, while another is ignored which tells far more definitely in the other direction. No evidence has ever been produced (apart from one or two hints from the very earliest days of doubtful legend) for monks doing what lay lords and ladies fairly often did, that is, freeing considerable numbers of serfs, without payment, for the good of the owner's soul. For nearly all the monastic enfranchisements recorded, we have either explicit documentary evidence that the serf bought his liberty with hard cash, or have strong reasons to suspect it. A thirteenth-century abbot of St-Germain-des-Prés, for instance, sold to a village, for 1400 livres (or the pre-war equivalent of about £3000), not complete freedom, but remission of the most onerous servile dues and disabilities. The chapter of Notre-Dame-de-Paris once got 4000 livres for a similar enfranchisement. It is often complained of spendthrift abbots or officials that they are embezzling conventual property by granting manumissions and pocketing the money. For, if the churchman was of all men the most unwilling manumitter, this was partly because the thing was forbidden both in conscience and in law. The serf was no more really his own man than the land was his own: canon law explicitly forbade alienation of serfs as of any other kind of property; and English records show how, in the few cases where a bishop wanted to free a trusty servant who was not too decrepit to have lost his market value, he found it advisable to secure himself by procuring papal licence. Serfdom, therefore, lasted longest of all on ecclesiastical, and especially monastic, estates; there were about 300,000 in France when the Revolution broke out.

Consequently the monk shared, and justly shared, nearly all of such unpopularity as attached to landlordism in the Middle Ages. We find a few more kindly concessions on monastic than on lay manors; it may be assumed that the monk, aristocratic as his general outlook was in this matter, had nevertheless a

little more friendly intercourse with his tenants than the knight; religion must have done a little indirectly to ease the relations, even though it never attempted a systematic reform. It may probably be said that it was (to put it roughly) about 5 per cent. better to live on a monastic estate; the advantage was perhaps about the same which tenants of a college, or under the Crown, enjoy nowadays. But certainly there was no essential difference between monastic and lay landlordism during the last centuries of the Middle Ages. Indeed, we have already seen how two very distinguished witnesses assert the contrary, in words which it would be unfair to press with mathematical exactitude, but which it is far more absurd to ignore altogether<sup>1</sup>, viz. the Dominican cardinal Hugues de St-Cher, in about 1260, and Bishop Longland of Lincoln in 1526. We may take both these utterances to mean that the difference between monks and lay folk was scandalously small; just as, in Gibbon's time, though the fellows of Oxford and Cambridge colleges were not so idle as the squirearchy, yet here again the difference was too slight to save them from wide and well-merited reprobation.

It is often asserted, on the strength of an anonymous partisan pamphlet written long after the Reformation, that the medieval monks never rackrented their tenants. Their own records, which survive in abundance, prove conclusively that they did. Again the monks of Ramsey needed the overseer's rod for the harvest; thirdly, the two documents which prove for certain that widows and bachelors were forced into marriage come from the records of two monasteries. The heriot, most odious perhaps of all medieval dues, was exacted as pitilessly by the monk as by the layman; here and there a saint might remit it, but of no monastery do we read what is to be found in a lay lord's charter of about 1200, in which Richard de Flete, at the prayers of his wife and for the sake of his own and his kinsfolk's souls, solemnly abandons from henceforth his right of taking from the peasant-widow and her orphan children a death-duty which might amount to ten shillings in the pound<sup>2</sup>. On the contrary, it was

<sup>1</sup> Chapter II, *ad fin.*

<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Jeanton cites as exceptional "la très curieuse charte de Chailly, par laquelle Agnès de Bourbon affranchit ses hommes de la mainmorte [*i.e.* heriot], craignant, dit-elle, qu'elle et ses prédécesseurs n'aient abusé de leur droit sur les serfs."

the great abbey of St-Claude in the Jura, recently erected into a bishopric, which exacted the heriot in some of its most odious forms until the Revolution swept all these things away. And, while the monk as landlord took his heriot, he often took from the same peasant family, as parson, the almost equally odious tribute of "mortuary." In 1204, Innocent III spoke of the scandal generated by the custom, already immemorial, by which the clergy seized the beds of their dead parishioners. It is a "laudable custom" (says the great pope), and the parson has every right to enforce it, but he is advised to "use no burdensome exaction or dishonourable importunity," though the Church must always support him whenever he makes the claim. Such a rescript was not calculated to bring any lasting peace; the custom was solemnly annulled by Ferdinand V of Aragon, and in England under Henry VIII; but the attitude of the clergy is revealed by a treatise of Pierre Albert, grand-prior of Cluny, in about 1430. He is much exercised by the continued resistance to this laudable custom, a resistance which is very prejudicial to the rectorial rights of the Cluniacs. His arguments are endless, and of infinite subtlety, as little calculated in general to convince the medieval as the modern layman; but to one fundamental point he constantly recurs (and here even the objector must have recognized that the monk's plea was irresistibly valid in strict law): "the laity cannot deny that the bedding is due, since this has been the custom from time immemorial." Many lay folk, no doubt, reconciled themselves to it, and to the mortuary system generally, in the hope that it might help their souls in the next world. The growing number of rebels had only one extreme and somewhat desperate remedy; they might desert the village<sup>1</sup>. In 1446, the abbot and convent of Cerisy in Normandy complained to the pope that, whereas it had been customary from time immemorial

whensoever any head of a household died among the men of the lands of Cerisy and [Lisery] without wife or child, that [the monks] should take all his goods to their own use; but, if he left wife and offspring, then such goods should be divided in three equal portions

<sup>1</sup> This was so in many parts of France and Germany, where the peasant might formally "disavow" his lord, so long as he was prepared to give up his land and possibly a considerable part of his movable property. In England the right of *désaveu* did not exist for the serf.



between the abbot and convent, the wife, and the children; and furthermore, the garments of the said deceased householders were applied to the uses of the said monastery, to wit, those of Cerisy to the sacristy and those of Lisery to the granary; and, seeing that the aforesaid men and parishioners (who were in many ways brought down and impoverished by reason of the wars and other calamities which had long oppressed those parts) were deserting these lands and betaking themselves elsewhere for fear of this said burden and servitude; moreover they refused to marry their daughters there, to the great—nay, the greatest—loss and damage of the said monastery; and also, by reason of the said goods, very many [*quam plurimi*] of the said inhabitants had incurred and were incurring the sentence of excommunication by not faithfully surrendering the aforesaid movables...but hiding them and defrauding the monastery.... Therefore, at the humble request of the said inhabitants, who were ready to indemnify the said monastery with greater revenues than the amount of the said tributes, the abbot and convent have agreed and accorded with the said men

that this due should be abolished, in consideration of a yearly payment of 20 *livres tournois*, until they could scrape together, within six years, 300 gold pieces as a final composition for all future payments<sup>1</sup>. We have a similar record from the monastery of La Ferté-sur-Grosne in 1446:

By reason of the heriot which we have over the inhabitants and peasants of St-Ambreuil, the greater part of the aforesaid inhabitants, especially the young folk, are leaving this domain, because their neighbours despise them and will not give them their children in marriage<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, when the poor revolted—and of such revolts we still have many records, in spite of the fact that Hodge has left no literature of his own—they nearly always struck with equal rage at the squire and at the monk. I have told these stories briefly elsewhere<sup>3</sup>. The bloodiest of all, the German Bauernkrieg of 1524-5, had its main foundation in the fury

<sup>1</sup> H. Denifle, *La désolation des églises, etc.* vol. 1, p. 536; the editor gives two other parallel quotations in a footnote; one of them is monastic. Jeanton (p. 176) quotes twenty-nine cases, between 1408 and 1596, of Burgundian villages where we have explicit notice of “la dépopulation causée par le formariage, par la répugnance que les francs avaient à venir habiter en lieu serf et plus généralement par les charges serviles.”

<sup>2</sup> E. Lavisse, *Hist. de France*, vol. iv, ii, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> *The Medieval Village*, pp. 126-36; to these may be added the serious revolts against the monks of St Mary's, York, in 1262, of Norwich cathedral in 1272, and of Sherborne in 1437 (Dugdale-Caley, vol. iii, p. 538; vol. iv, p. 3; W. B. Wildman, *Short Hist. of Sherborne*, 2nd ed. p. 24).

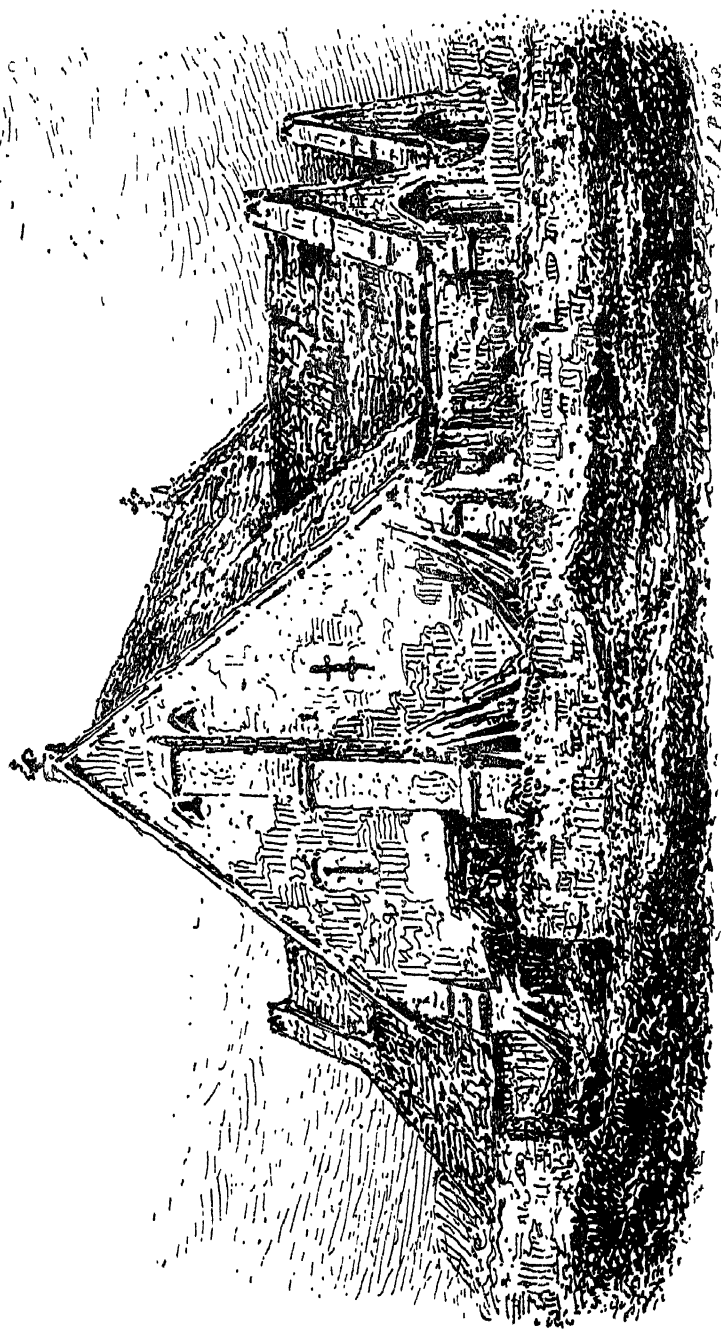
excited by the oppressive rule of the abbot of Kempten. In so far as the Lincolnshire Rising and the allied Pilgrimage of Grace, in 1536, were revolts in favour of the monks—and this is very far from being the whole truth—they were not normal, but exceptional events. It is more and more generally recognized now that, in so far as the English peasantry suffered a set-back after the Reformation, this was due to many other causes besides the Dissolution; and certainly our labourers as a whole, from 1536 to the present day, have had no cause to envy their brethren in countries where the monk still reigned. France was the Eldest Daughter of the Church, and her peasantry were less happy than ours until the Revolution of 1789. Perhaps the most miserable peasantry in all Europe, and the least touched by religion, is that which now inhabits the remoter district of the Campagna, almost within sight of St Peter's<sup>1</sup>.

The peasant, then, knew the monk mainly as a lord not very different from other lords. Alms were given at the abbey gate, but far less than is commonly supposed<sup>2</sup>; and, if these had been multiplied fourfold, they would not have equalled what the monks drew from their rights, hallowed by custom and law, of taking to their own use the greater part of the endowments of a large number of parishes. The monk was often a banker and a trader; he was no longer a workman, but very often a sportsman; Chaucer's picture can be corroborated from many different sources. It was notorious, and popes and councils complained in vain, that the monasteries neglected the villages from which they generally sucked about two-thirds, and sometimes a great deal more, of the parochial endowments. "In many parish churches," pleaded Bishop Guillaume Durand to pope and council at Vienne in 1311, "and especially in those that are at the gift or collation or disposition of exempt Religious, there is a general defect of vestments. . . books, chalices and so forth"<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> A. Cervesato, *The Roman Campagna* (translation pub. by Fisher Unwin, 1913), pp. 176 ff.; I give similar evidence in Appendix 8.

<sup>2</sup> All the points dealt with on this page will be far more fully treated in my next volume. This will also contain a brief summary of the evidence as to monastic appropriations of parish revenues, which I have given far more fully in *Hist. Teach. Misc.* from December 1925 to July 1926.

<sup>3</sup> Durandus, *De modo generalis concilii habendi*, pars III, tit. 58; cf. Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. III, p. 363 (artt. 20, 21) and the frequent complaints of Thomas Gascoigne in his *Liber Veritatum*.



Tithe Barn at Douling, Somersetshire

This is borne out by the scattered visitation records which have survived. Among these, the only one which does not amply justify Durand's sweeping accusation is the *Vetus Liber Archidiaconi Eliensis* (Camb. Antiq. Soc. 1917). Here we are dealing with one of the richest and most peaceful corners of Europe at the time (mainly 1278-1302), and, again, the record is far less businesslike than its later parallels, not enabling us always to decide definitely as to deficiencies of necessary articles. The worst that can be clearly ascertained is that, in appropriated churches as in others, the font not infrequently lacked that lock and key upon which Church councils insisted, to guard the sacred water from abuse for purposes of witchcraft; also, here and there, the service-books are unsatisfactory. But the book shows one thing quite clearly, that in these appropriated churches priests and people had to provide books and ornaments for themselves, and could count little upon generosity here from the convents which took the greater part of the parish revenues. In the first half of the book, there are more than 100 cases in which the parish clergy or lay folk are recorded as having contributed books, vestments or ornaments, and only four monastic donors, even counting the very doubtful case of "Thomas at Priores" on p. 75. At Hardleston (p. 93) the vicar had given a lenten veil, but had felt it necessary to add a safeguard, "under protestation that his successor should not be compelled to provide this article." At Linton, about 1300, there was no reredos and the windows were broken: this church was appropriated to St Mary's abbey at York. The *Taxatio Nicolai* of 1291 A.D. (p. 267 b) shows a division of the rich revenues of this parish in the following proportions: the York monks took £20, the prior of Swavesey, 18s., the prior of Rumburgh (a cell to York), £2. 13s. 4d., and the vicar, who did the actual parish work, £5.

But later and more explicit records from other districts show startling neglect of the churches and their ornaments in general, especially among appropriated churches<sup>1</sup>. The worst, perhaps, are those appropriated to deans and chapters; but certainly the monastic appropriations run these very close. A visitation held in 1342 throughout the parishes in the Totnes archdeaconry, which

<sup>1</sup> For translations of 15 of these reports, see Appendix 9.

is easily accessible in *The English Historical Review* (Jan. 1911, p. 108), shows that, though the appropriated churches numbered only about a third of the 170 churches and chapelries visited, yet this third supplied more defects than the other two-thirds. The visitors condemned 12 vicarial and 12 rectorial chancels, but the worst reports were on the former; of the 11 worst chancels, seven were monastic. When we read in *Piers Plowman* of "Religious, that have no ruth though it rain on their altars," we are not in the presence of a mere satirical hyperbole: in two out of the seven bad monastic chancels (Hennock and Tavistock), the rain actually falls upon the altar. In three cases there is no reredos to the altar; all three churches are appropriated to monasteries (Churston-Ferrers, Tavistock and Lamerton). In the matter of service-books, only three out of the twenty monastic churches have a clean bill; in the seventeen others, one or more of the necessary volumes is either altogether missing or "insufficiens"; out of the 200 volumes which should have existed in these 20 appropriated churches, 63 were missing or insufficient<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the visitors here give us invaluable information as to the cost of supplying the missing books and ornaments, or of rebuilding the ruinous walls and roofs. From these we may estimate that if the monasteries had made a practice of spending, once in each generation, a single year's profits from the parish upon the upkeep of the parish church, they could easily have supplied all deficiencies.

This visitation does not deal specially with the moral state of the parishes: upon this subject we have fuller evidence from a Visitation of the Diocese of Lausanne in 1416-17<sup>2</sup>. Here, among 273 churches reported on, 136 were in the gift of monastic bodies, and most of them, apparently, appropriated to the monks. The dilapidations here are even more remarkable than in Devonshire. Out of the 273 churches, 39 were seriously dilapidated in fabric, and nine more or less out of repair, while there are not half-a-dozen which can show a clean bill as to books and ornaments; in other words, 98 per cent. show more or less

<sup>1</sup> The legal requirements may be found in § XII of Bishop Quivil's constitutions (Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. II, p. 139).

<sup>2</sup> *Mém. et doc. pub. par la Soc. d'hist. de la Suisse romande*, seconde série, t. XI (1921).

serious deficiencies. Among the 136 monastic churches, there were 16 where the service-books needed binding, and 64 more where they were still more seriously defective. In 44 of these monastic parishes the parson (as apart from the monastic patrons, apparently) was non-resident; in 40, he was a concubinary priest. As to excommunications for total neglect of Holy Communion during the year, the monastic parishes had about the usual average, of more than 6 per cent. of households, which would mean that more than 2 per cent. of the adult population preferred excommunication to communion.

The third series deals with the diocese of Worms, one of the most prosperous and civilized districts in Europe at that day<sup>1</sup>. Both in dilapidations and in morals, the monastic parishes here are rather worse than Devon, and rather better than Lausanne. In three of them it rains on the altar (pp. 284, 290, 298). And much is explained by an entry under Ludelnheim, of which the monks of Höningen were patrons (p. 290): "The churchyard wall is broken down for a great part of the west side, and so it has been for ten years; the sidesmen always report it [to the visitors], but nothing is done."

It must be borne in mind that, in all churches, the upkeep of the nave, font, lenten veil, and many other articles was thrown by Church law upon the parishioners, and that, in some, the monks had even contracted out of their rectorial liability for the upkeep of the chancel and its furniture. But this only throws the question one step farther back; men who take two-thirds of the endowments (and this was about the average) may indeed escape legal liability for the impoverishment of the churches, but not moral responsibility. Again, we have no detailed reports from so early a date as 1200 and, if such had survived, they would probably have been distinctly less unfavourable than these of later date. Yet the scandal was deep and widespread even then. In 1102, the Council of Westminster had to legislate in general terms against appropriators who "so rob the revenues of the churches given unto them, that the priests who serve them lack that which they need for themselves and for their churches." Alexander III in 1179, and

<sup>1</sup> Printed in *Zeitschrift f. d. Gesch. d. Oberrheins*, vol. XXVII (1875), pp. 227 ff., 385 ff.

Innocent III in 1215, fulminated in similar words; for (said Innocent),

We have learned for certain that there are certain regions where the parish priests have for their sustentation only the fourth of a fourth, to wit, the sixteenth part of the tithes; whence it cometh that in those regions scarce any parish priest can be found who has even a scanty knowledge of letters<sup>1</sup>.

Between this date and 1268, we find Archbishop Langton, the legate Othobon, and two great bishops of Lincoln struggling hard against the growing abuse. Already in 1200, then, the poor had reason to look upon the monk not only as a capitalist landlord, but as a robber (it is the assembled Fathers at Westminster who use the word) of his parish revenues, one-fourth of which were, in theory, earmarked for charity to the necessitous. To this important question I must return in my next volume in connexion with other sources of monastic income; meanwhile, I may again refer readers who may be interested in a still fuller exposition of the evidence to my articles in *The History Teachers' Miscellany* from December 1925 to July 1926. Too little stress has been ordinarily laid upon this system, in its influence on the attitude of contemporaries towards monasticism.

<sup>1</sup> These decrees may be found in Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. I, p. 383 (c. 22); Hardouin, *Concilia*, vol. xxvii (1644), pp. 580 and 601; Fourth Lateran Council, c. 32.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONTEMPORARY COMPLAINTS

FOR all these things had necessarily their moral reaction. The movement was as wide as the institution itself was widespread; what may be said literally of the great monasteries must be applied proportionately to the smaller houses: the monk's wealth rendered him more and more an economic factor in society, less and less a moral factor. These possessors of great revenues had first learned to enjoy their possessions, then to struggle for the maintenance of their income, then to fight for its increase. It is no mere chance that the large majority of monastic writings which have come down to us from the later Middle Ages are concerned mainly with money and money's worth; that the very chronicles are often little more than a domestic commentary on the debit and credit sides of the ledger; that the chroniclers are apt to treat a merely spiritual abbot as an encumbrance, if he possess not also certain very definite business qualities. From many other sources we might parallel the naïve confession in Jocelin of Brakelond, that, when the great Abbot Samson is dead, "my advice will be, if I am still alive, that we choose nobody who is a very good monk or a very learned man"<sup>1</sup>. And, if we require farther light on these words, we may find it in such a collection as the fifth *Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records* (1844), pp. 67 ff., where letter after letter shows the ordinary concern taken by royal and noble "founders," as a matter of business, in these elections to highly lucrative posts. The abbot, once elected, had in theory almost absolute power within his own precinct-walls, but in fact he was deeply implicated with his great patrons, and deeply concerned, unless he had very unusual force of character, in keeping his monks fairly contented. This comes out very plainly from the documents which I shall have occasion to quote in my next volume; it comes out almost as plainly in Jocelin's chronicle.

<sup>1</sup> C.S. p. 11. Clarke (p. 18) has not rendered this quite literally.



And the world of 1200 was rapidly learning to judge the monks by the standards which monks so often applied to each other. The world had, by this time, no doubt of their spiritual decline; the question was more and more one of their social and economic services to society; and, in this field again, they were losing ground. There are as yet no suggestions of disendowment except from a minority of heretics; but learned and orthodox men are already saying things which, when they have been repeated from generation to generation, cannot fail to suggest some measure of disendowment at last. To treat this question as if it had first arisen in the reign of Henry VIII is to falsify the whole social history of the Middle Ages, in which, for good or for evil, monasticism was one of the chief social forces<sup>1</sup>. And I must remind the reader again here (since, though plainly said before, it has not been plain enough for some critics), that the historian's task is to enable his readers to judge not so much the individual monk—except where men like St Bernard and St Francis have left us an undying example—as the social value of the group to which he belonged; for religious values are unreal unless they are social values also. It was natural, then, in the circumstances already described, that monasticism should suffer seriously in social influence; and, that this natural consequence did in fact follow, cannot be seriously contested in the face of unexceptionable contemporary witnesses.

Frequent as are the medieval treatises which extol the ideal monk's life, they seldom lack a note of explicit or implicit regret at the contrast between the ideal and the actual. Apart from authors who are avowedly dealing only with some particular monastery in its heyday, or with some great reform in its early vigour, I know of only one medieval writer who even seems to assert that the monachism of his day is thoroughly healthy, and that single exception, when closely considered, proves only apparent. Otto of Freisingen, grandson to the Emperor Henry IV, wrote his very valuable chronicle about 1150; he had been abbot of the Cistercian house of Morimond before he became bishop of Freisingen. At the end of the 34th chapter of his 7th

<sup>1</sup> Sabatier, who has been accused of exaggeration in ch. iii of his *Life of St Francis*, rather understates the real facts. Even Luchaire's darker picture can hardly be accused of exaggeration (*Social France*, chs. vi and vii). See Lingard's judgement in Appendix 10.

book, he expatiates on the miseries of his own time, so great that

it even irks us to live, especially since, both through the multitude of our sins and through the dregs of iniquity which pollute this most tumultuous age, we should judge that this world could not last long, unless it were sustained by the merits of those holy citizens of the true City of God, of whom many congregations flourish throughout the whole world, under fair and various distinctions.

Therefore, he continues,

I think it would be inopportune here to omit all mention of the divers orders of Religious by whose sanctity (as I have said) the wickedness of the world is in a manner redeemed; rather let me set down the glorious deeds of illustrious men as a boundary and a limit to the turbulence of so many evils.

Therefore (not to mention those who, among the secular clergy and the laity, live as though their possessions were not their own, and mercifully serve the necessities of their brethren), there are divers hosts [*agmina*] of holy folks who, renouncing their own desires, possessions, and kinsfolk in accordance with the gospel mandate, and constantly bearing the cross in mortification of their flesh, follow Christ in fulness of heavenly desires. Some of these, dwelling in cities, towns, villages and fields, offer by word and by example a model of good life to their neighbours; others, again, scorn human cohabitation, look more closely to their own quiet, flee from the concourse of men, and, intent upon God alone, betake themselves to hiding-places in woods and in sequestered spots. The former refuse not to let their light shine before men, to the glory of God; the latter, knowing themselves to be dead to the world, hide their life for the present with Christ in God, and wish not their glory to shine forth until Christ, who is their life, shall appear in glory; yet all alike, in their purity and holiness of life and conscience, live a heavenly and angelic life on earth. For they live together in monasteries or churches, having one heart and one mind; they take their sleep together, they rise with one accord to prayer, they are fed in one room; and together they set themselves by day and night, with such unwearied vigilance, to prayer and reading and labour that, except the brief space when they lay their wearied limbs to rest on a rug or on a coarse bedstraw of twigs [*vilibus et vimineis stramentis*], they deem it a sin that any moment should go by without some holy occupation, to such an extent that, even during their times of natural refection, they are so intent upon the holy scriptures as to feast their spirit rather than their body. All alike abstain from flesh; some, indeed, restraining themselves from wine and from all more delicate food, feed sometimes on pulse, sometimes on mere bread and water. What shall I say of

their celibacy? for they rise to such a height above that law of marriage, so common and so clearly indulged to mankind, that some of them keep so diligent claustration not only in the inner buildings but also in the outer, that women are never allowed to enter there for any cause whatever; nay, not even for the sake of prayer!<sup>1</sup> For all the offices of the various artificers—bakers, smiths, weavers and so forth—are built inside the monastery and most carefully fenced in; in the outer precinct stands a gate constantly inhabited by some religious and godfearing brother, who receiveth all that come, guests, pilgrims and poor, cheerfully and kindly as though he welcomed Christ himself. For he bringeth them first to the oratory, then to the guesten hall, washing their feet and offering them every beneficent office. If any woman cometh for the sake of exhortation or any other duty, she is left outside and visited by the father of the monastery or by one of the brethren, not in any chamber nor alone, but in some public place open to the air, with only a floor and a scanty roof to ward off the rain. Other monasteries, without rejecting them from the church for the sake of prayer, yet forbid them from all access to the inner buildings of the brethren. Moreover, these brethren keep themselves with such diligence that they abhor not only greater offences but even the least and slightest, which we use so often that we regard them not; so that they speak only very rarely, unless it be to God or to the father of their congregation; and this less with the tongue than by signs, whereby they ask each other for the necessities of life. If, however, any hath offended by human frailty, even in the smallest thing, they come together about the first or third hour of the day to a place appointed, where they first pray for God's help, and then humbly confess their faults and correct each other with mutual charity. There their superior [*senior*] sitteth to judge them without wrath, but with kindly severity; there also, with serene face and honeyed lips, he informeth them oftentimes in holy scripture, preparing these beginners in the course of their present life to be worthy of comradeship with the army of God, clarifying and polishing their minds.

But, even as the beauty of a house is seen in its very vestibule, so doth their outward habit declare unto the world how their inner man shineth before God, the searcher of all hearts. For, as they glisten within with the rays of various virtues, so they appear without in vestments of manifold colours, as the Psalmist writeth: "All the glory of the king's daughter is within in golden borders, clothed round about with varieties." Some, leading an apostolic life and showing the purity of their innocence in their very dress, wear a

<sup>1</sup> The beautiful little church of Tilty in Essex was originally the outer chapel of a Cistercian monastery, built apart from the rest for the worship of such outside folk; this was a Cistercian custom.

clean linen cloak; other men of the same order are more roughly clad in woollen tunics for the mortification of the flesh. Others, free from all external occupations, showing their angelic life in their very garments, typify its sweetness rather in the shape than in the softness of that which they wear. For they lay next their flesh the roughest of tunics; upon which they set broader garments with hoods, divided into six parts, as it were the six wings of the seraphim. With two of these, that is, the hood, they cover their head; with two, that is, their sleeves, they soar to the sky, directing all their actions, as they stretch their hands, to God; with two others they veil the rest of their body before and behind; thus, with God's grace preventing and following, they show themselves fortified against all the wild darts of the tempter. Yet they differ in this, that some wear that garment black, to express their contempt of the world, while others, caring not for colour or texture, wear white or grey or any other rough and humble cloth<sup>1</sup>.

Being thus ordered within and without, and freely and copiously multiplied throughout the world, and increased beyond all measure, within a brief space, both in merit and in numbers, they flash forth in miracles, shine in virtues, are oftentimes raised aloft by divine revelations, and have frequent consolation in visions of God or his angels at the hour of death. They heal the sick, put demons to flight, and sometimes enjoy a foretaste in contemplation of the sweetness of their heavenly country, in so far as it can be enjoyed in this present life; wherefore, though worn with labour, fainting with vigils, emaciated with fasting, they spend almost their whole nights in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; like unto the cricket, who singeth the more lustily in his sorest hunger. They now abound most in France and Germany, as of old in Egypt; and we need hardly marvel at the translation of power and wisdom from East to West, when Religion hath so evidently taken the same course. Moreover, in divers places we find a holy congregation of anchorites and solitaries spiritually instructed to single combat [with the Devil] in the best fashion of warfare; these, though fewer in numbers, are equal or superior to the rest in austerity of life. Some, living under a superior in remote and sequestered places, dwell each in his own cell as in his tomb<sup>2</sup>. They live by the labour of their hands; content with scanty food, they receive their weekly allowance on the Saturday; lacking all kinds of human consolation, they are unwearied only in converse with God and in prayer, meeting only on Sundays in the common oratory; thence, having been watered by their superior with the word of holy exhortation, and fed with God's mysteries to the

<sup>1</sup> The allusion is mainly to the Black Benedictines and Cluniacs, the Grey Cistercians, and the White Premonstratensians.

<sup>2</sup> The Carthusians seem here to be intended.

health of their soul, they return with all alacrity to their cells. Others, desiring God alone for a witness of their life, enclose themselves in caves and holes and walls of stone; and, hanging upon God, they esteem themselves more truly to enjoy the sabbath-rest of the blessed, in proportion as they are exiled from all human society. Some, again, seek the squalor of the desert, shrink not from the wild company of savage beasts, feed on herbs, and cover their nakedness with skins. These, blackened like Ethiopians with the nightly frost and the midday heat, grow stiff as a drum, and, disdaining to enclose themselves in any earthly habitation while they live in this world, and taking the heaven for their roof, they show themselves to be not so truly men as companions of the Court of Heaven.

All these men, then, are secluded from all that miserable wheel of fortune which we call the world, and whereof we have discoursed above. These, already enjoying a foretaste of everlasting rest in the peace of God's true sabbath after the perfect labour of the six days, are the kindly and proper intercessors for this world out of joint [*nostrae enormitatis*]. With them, therefore, let us close this seventh book of our history; and may their prayers render us fit to write of that which followeth; namely, of the end which awaiteth the City of God, and the perdition which lieth in wait for the reprobate City of this World.

The eighth book, thus announced, is of the usual mystical type of medieval expositions on the Apocalypse.

The highly-coloured rhetoric of all this passage warns us from the first against a too literal credence; we must discount these words as we discount the similar rhetoric of other monks whose indignation prompts them to condemn their fellows in the same sweeping fashion. But, when we come to look under the surface, there is this difference, that the main points of the adverse evidence are corroborated by other unexceptionable evidence, while Otto's panegyric is contradicted, in certain important particulars, by irrefragable facts. Otto's own secretary and biographer, Ragewin, helps us to discount his master's words, for he tells us how the good bishop, coming from Morimond to Freisingen in 1138, found the diocese in such a state of decadence that "there was little or no memory of Religion in the monasteries"<sup>1</sup>. Eight years later, when Otto wrote this panegyric on monastic life, St Bernard was preaching the Second Crusade;

<sup>1</sup> *L.c.* introd. p. xi.

the Cistercians, Premonstratensians and other reformed Orders were then going on from strength to strength. The medieval mind was always subject to sudden alternations of despair and hope; and thus Otto, in a moment of exceptional exaltation, extolled the monachism of the moment with a lyric exaggeration to which I know no parallel. In general, as I shall have occasion to show later, the silence of monastic champions is almost as significant as the outspokenness of critics. And, as I have said, we can test Otto by facts. Cluny was certainly far more regular than the average monastery even in France, where monachism stood higher than in Italy, Spain, or most parts of Germany. Yet what Peter the Venerable himself tells us about Cluny is in direct contradiction to Otto's words. He shows that the Cluniacs of 1150 did not labour with their hands; they did not abstain altogether from flesh-food, strongly as the Rule insists upon these essential points. Equally false would it be to credit them with the strict claustration described by Otto; very many lived with a single companion in monastic granges, and we have seen how others were professional "outriders," as Chaucer and Langland call them, moving to and fro in the world on what were essentially worldly business-matters of corn and wine and cattle and money<sup>1</sup>. And, by comparing Otto with others of his century who have generalized about the monks, we may see still more clearly how the bishop of Freisingen, by an exaggeration common in rhetoric, attributed to monachism in general the eminent qualities of those few monks who were the salt of the earth and the saviours of society in his day.

Pierre de la Celle, as abbot of two great Benedictine houses and bishop of Chartres, knew quite as much about twelfth-century monachism as Otto. He has left us his impressions in those epistles which make us understand why Mabillon felt bound to comment on them, and why Mabillon's hierarchical superiors insisted on the suppression of those comments. The most significant is Pierre's letter to the monks of Molesme—the great abbey from which the first colony of the Cistercians had sprung—in about 1175. Taking his text from the shortcomings of this particular abbey, he deplores the decay of Benedictinism in general.

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 202, col. 599.

Like Jeremiah, I lament as I sit in consternation by the tomb of our Order.... That Order was once begotten of a great and noble race; its virtues were angelic; it was a most prudent teacher of morals, a perfect despiser of worldly things, and a proper lover of God's will. It was the vine which stretched its branches from sea to sea.... Alas! take now the foxes which destroy the vines, the cowed brethren who remove their fathers' landmarks, and tear down the hedge of regular discipline.... Methinks ye must be stirred against the authors of this barrenness; as often as ye see by your side the crown of holy spirits and blessed souls, and remember the ages of old, and the rich harvest heaped up in your bosoms. If a Phineas were here, it may be that he would vent his wrath in a dagger-stroke; but lo! every man putteth his sword in his sheath, and there is no man who girdeth up his loins to avenge his father's blood. Hence it is that the world is full of cows, and almost empty of true monks. Hence it is that the chaff is not winnowed from God's threshing-floor, but increased; that the thorns are not uprooted, but suffered to multiply. I, cowed as I am, behold this iniquity, but what do I? I cannot recall this dead Order to life; and how shall I find patience to celebrate its funeral exequies among a crew of parricides? I cannot check its course to the abyss; must I then become a companion of thieves? All are running not for the crown, but into evil; and what can I do? I would wish, like the Apostle, to be accursed from Christ for my brethren's sake. Who will grant me to die for thy life, O most sacred Order? thou in whose presence, of old days, the princes ceased to speak, and laid the finger on their mouth; the young men hid themselves when he sat in the gate, and rose up, and durst add nothing to his words [Job xxix, 7 ff.]. But now he is derided by those of younger years, for that Isaac was grown old and could not see clear; David was grown old, and no vesture could warm him. Yet Moses, at the age of six-score years, was neither dim of eye nor were his teeth moved<sup>1</sup>. Since, then, the professors of this Rule, though they have an outward show of piety, are like Isaac and David; since their spirit is grown cold with age and their eyes are grown dim, yet Moses (that is, the blessed Benedict) looketh down even now with clear eyes upon our iniquity; and at the last day he will bite us with his teeth, accusing before God those who have despised his decrees and their own profession of the Rule.

So wrote one of the most distinguished Benedictines of his century, and those who read his other letters will not be inclined to question his sincerity; he would indeed have given his life for the Order. After these Benedictine witnesses, let us now

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxxiv, 7, Vulg., where the A.V. has "nor his natural force abated."

take the evidence of three non-Benedictines of European reputation: Giraldus Cambrensis, Walter Map, and Cardinal Jacques de Vitry.

Giraldus Cambrensis wrote about 1210: we must remember that he was a stylist with a strongly satirical turn, but there is little reason why we should discount this archdeacon's evidence about the monks more heavily than we discount him when he speaks of the king and his court; subjects on which he is recognized as a primary authority<sup>1</sup>. He is most outspoken in his *Speculum Ecclesiae* (vol. iv of his collected works). In this book he frequently writes in sympathy with all that was wholesome in monachism (pp. 80, 104, 106, 112, 114, 117, 125, 129, 134, 142, 160, 161, 172, 176, 194, 195, 238). But his general verdict is that the monks, as a whole, had failed; that the good were less numerous than the bad (pp. 177, 195). Of the Benedictines he says little, except to note the gluttony of the monks at Canterbury cathedral<sup>2</sup> (p. 40), and to note that the Benedictine growth in riches has brought decay in morals (pp. 41-3, 100). Gluttony is the natural child of wealth, and father of incontinence;

when wealth and affluence grew with time, and vitiated the whole Order, provoking belly-cramming and, alas! almost wholly changing its early holiness into worldliness, then this added leaven of gluttony proceeded forthwith to dissolve and corrupt the whole lump of pristine probity and virtue.

A knight, on his way to Compostella, passed through a district where he was told that

the monks of these parts keep their mistresses and lemans publicly;

<sup>1</sup> Doubtless (as Brewer points out in his introduction to vol. iv, p. xxviii) we must note that the worst things Giraldus says against the Cistercians are derived from Wales or the borderland, where conditions were specially barbarous. But Brewer is very ill-advised to complain that Giraldus, by confining himself mainly to the Cistercians and Cluniacs, and by saying little expressly about the far more numerous Benedictines, has given us a distorted view (p. xiv). All witnesses agree in representing the Cluniacs and Cistercians of this time as far better disciplined than the average Benedictine; Giraldus, therefore, naturally confines his criticisms mainly to the two former, leaving his words to be applied *a fortiori* to the latter. And Brewer's general description of the monks' civilizing work (pp. xxxi-xxxviii) is not only disfigured by the same ludicrous exaggerations as his preface to the *Monumenta Franciscana*, but also contains gross blunders, as in what he says about the lay status of the monk, and where he tells us that monks were "the only medical practitioners."

<sup>2</sup> This is fully translated in my *Social Life in Britain*, p. 116.



you need not wonder at this, for the Order is not so strict hereabouts as it is, perchance, in your country... In [parts of France,] Burgundy and Italy, as far as Rome and beyond, the Cluniac monks bear themselves in a far more disorderly fashion than in England. On the other hand, the Cistercians of those regions keep their Order far better and more decently than in England (p. 45).

A strict Cistercian abbot, like Serlo, could say in all seriousness that he would rather face death as a black mastiff than as a black monk, since a dog has at least no hell to fear<sup>1</sup>. Giraldus quotes many concrete cases; those of a sodomitical abbot in one monastery and prior in another (pp. 88 ff.); those of three deposed abbots of his time (pp. 90 ff.). The first of these was the abbot of Evesham, whose whole story we have in the Evesham Chronicle, to prove that Giraldus writes not as a satirist but as a sober historian. His amours were promiscuous, "none was safe from his lust"; the neighbourhood reckoned his children at 18 or more; and, after many years, the papal legate at last deposed him.

But what punishment, pray, could equal the offences of this flagitious fellow, vilest of men?... I myself have seen this beast... sitting side by side with the abbot of Abingdon, who had been promoted to his abbacy from the post of kitchener, through a bribe of fifteen hundred marks which he had given to a prince; and these two, congratulating each other on the wealth and delights they had thus earned, rejoiced together and caressed each other in mutual embraces.

Another abbot deposed by the legate was he of Bardney, who indulged in hounds and hawks as though he were a hunter and fowler by trade, and who openly sinned with women and led a life of pleasure, defiling the monastic order in his own province no less than that other fellow, by the grievous scandal of these and many other enormities... Thirdly, he deposed the abbot of Westminster, whom public report named as no less flagitious than the other two, and equally deserving of deposition... O, how many still lurk in the English church like unto these three beasts aforesaid, or even worse and more perilously wandering from the way of truth and decency, if worse may be! men whom we know not yet to have been corrected by the abbots their superiors or by the papal legates; men who have either not yet been visited with due care, or perchance

<sup>1</sup> p. 105. Next page, Giraldus admits that the condemnation is too sweeping, however justly it may be applied in certain cases.

have been commended as well-doers through some favour, or through the scent of filthy lucre, which bloweth oftentimes through the nostrils of rich men; or who perchance have been altogether winked at and left alone.

For beasts of this kind were dangerous; an abbot confessed to Giraldus that, well as he knew his monks' gluttony, if he attempted to restrict it he would be poisoned, as others had tried to poison St Benedict (p. 42). Therefore Giraldus sees clearly that the foundation of monastic discipline is a real and effectual visitation system (pp. 45, 93, 102, 114). As things were, monks could do pretty well as they pleased in the numerous small cells which were scattered about everywhere. We cannot expect to keep communities clean unless they number at least 13 monks<sup>1</sup>. And, summing up the monks' defects, he adds: "We read that it was this unruly fault and excess, [together with those of waste and gluttony], which made St Bernard wish that he might sit three years on the papal throne, in order that he might extirpate them from the monasteries" (vol. II, pp. 31, 35-6).

But these are the monks in general: Giraldus has high praise for the Carthusians (vol. IV, p. 259), and regards the Cistercians also as standing definitely above the average, chiefly because of their strict visitatorial system (vol. II, pp. 45, 105; vol. IV, pp. 102, 114). He does not regard even Cistercian morals as altogether above suspicion: it is a bad system which deposes monks to live so much alone as supervisors of granges, or to go so much abroad as cellarers. But they are still distinguished for their charities; the worst that can be charged against the Order as a whole is its commercial spirit, with the attendant vice of rapacity.

Very similar is the attitude of Giraldus's brother-archdeacon, Walter Map. He also regards the Cistercians as the best, but he complains that they swallow up parochial endowments by appropriation, to the neglect of God's service. Their grange system, and their exemptions from episcopal control, expose them to great dangers, but here he does not go on to hint, like

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* 12 monks, with a prior. Compare this with Cardinal Gasquet's contention that the number 12, which Henry VIII first chose as the limit between houses to be maintained and houses to be suppressed, was merely chosen *ad captandum* (*I.c.* II, 308). The value attached by the Benedictines to this number 12, as a minimum for efficiency, is one of the most salient and frequently-recurring facts in Benedictine documents of the Middle Ages.

Giraldus, at anything worse. Their mode of life is no harder than that which Map's fellow-countrymen, the Welsh, voluntarily endure; he also, like Giraldus, testifies to their charities.

It would be unfair to emphasize unduly the evidence of professed satirists, but, on the other hand, we cannot ignore it altogether, for the satirist must, in most cases, have some foundation to build upon. Those of this period spare neither the monks' morals in general, nor even those of the Cistercians<sup>1</sup>.

But the most plain-spoken of all monastic critics is a very different person—Cardinal Jacques de Vitry, an Austin canon of intellectual and moral distinction and of wide experience, whose evidence needs no discount beyond what we ordinarily apply to an enthusiastic mission-preacher. In his *Historia Occidentalis*, written about 1230, he describes the corruptions of the world before the friars' reform. After picturing the luxury and immorality of general society at the end of the twelfth century, he comes to the cloister-folk<sup>2</sup>.

As for those who had renounced the world for the religious habit and bound themselves by monastic vows, they kept indeed an outward show of piety, but denied its inward virtue; and, the more eminent was their position, the more grievously and miserably did they fall after taking the vows. Disobedient, murmurers, backbiters, bearing Christ's cross unwillingly, unclean and incontinent, walking after the flesh and not after the spirit, they had looked back after putting their hand to the plough, or as Lot's wife looked back. Lusting after the garlic and melons and fleshpots of Egypt, loathing the manna of the desert, they died and were buried in the tombs of concupiscence; for they had cast off their first faith. Very many of them [*plurimi*], supposing that gain is godliness, were wont to put no difference between the holy and profane, but to accept indifferently flesh that was dead of itself, or torn of beasts<sup>3</sup>, as offerings from usurers or robbers, asking no questions for avarice' sake.

He then describes the reforms of Cîteaux, Prémontré, Chartreuse, etc. To religious women these reforms were a special boon; for thus

devout virgins and holy women, putting off their [frailer] womanly temper in fervour of the spirit and [godly] desire, escaped from the shipwreck of the world, and came into the tranquil haven of the

<sup>1</sup> *E.g. Poems attributed to Walter Mapes* (Camden Soc.), pp. xl ff., 56, 187, 242.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. 1597, pp. 268, 304, 316, 323, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel xlv, 31.

Cistercian Order by taking the regular habit. For they dared not to commit themselves without fear to other congregations of nuns, by reason of their extreme dissoluteness of life, since cloistered nuns had fallen almost everywhere into such corruption and decay, that girls could find no [safe] refuge among them. For how hard and perilous it is to keep chastity among shameless women, is unknown to those only who are ignorant of the thousand arts and malpractices of such persons. Moreover, the nuns were wont publicly and promiscuously to exact money for this miserable admission to their convents, alleging their own poverty; so that, making light of the abominable vice of simony, they changed the house of prayer into a traders' marketplace. Nay, but there was scarce one who shrank from keeping private property to herself, like Ananias and Sapphira whom God condemned.

This Cistercian success encouraged the Premonstratensians also to take nuns, and even led to the reform of some of the older nunneries and the construction of fresh houses; hence a great multiplication of orderly convents. But these reforms were not always durable. Among the Premonstratensians, in the first days, the nuns were kept so strictly enclosed within the monastic precincts, that no man was allowed access to them. And, while they sang not in church or choir, but only spent their time in silent prayer, reading their psalters and saying the canonical Hours or those of the Blessed Virgin with all humility and devotion, meanwhile the priests and clerks of the Order dwelt separately, approved and religious men, who served them in divine service, heard their confessions through [grated] windows, and made it their business at certain times to instruct and inform them in the words of Holy Scripture. But when they changed these windows into doors, and the first fervour grew cold, and imprudent security began to make room for torpor and negligence, then, "while the woman that kept the door slumbered in the heat of the day, Ishbosheth was smitten in the belly"<sup>1</sup>. Thus, while the Enemy pierced the hold of the Ark, the waters rushed in from below, and many of both sexes were plunged into the mud and perished, learning at last by bitter experience the truth of those words of St Jerome: "When men and women live together, there will never be lack of the devil's birdlime."...Therefore the Premonstratensians prudently, though tardily, decreed with one voice that they would thenceforth receive no nuns into their Order<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Samuel iv, 6, Vulg. Vitry's words are: "dormiente ostiaria in fervore diei Ishobeth percussus est in inguine."

<sup>2</sup> Later, they found themselves compelled to rescind this decree and to undertake the care of the nuns again, as did the Dominicans and the Franciscans under similar circumstances.

And, between these two judgements on the nunneries, the cardinal returns again to the men's houses (pp. 316 ff., 320). The older Benedictines—the "Black Monks of St Benedict"—were still by far the most numerous of all, and Jacques writes eloquently of their services in the past; "no Order hath had such holy men." But secessions such as those of the Cistercians and of the monks of Tiron had been unavoidable: these reformers "wished to go back themselves to the practice of those original observances of the Black Monks which these others, from whom they departed, had to a great extent abandoned through negligence and indiscipline [*dissolutionem*]." While painting an idyllic picture of early Benedictinism which is not quite borne out by the actual records, but which does not go beyond the exaggerations natural to an enthusiastic churchman, the cardinal proceeds to describe their decay. Their very success had been their ruin; kings, nobles, and rich men:

thought themselves blessed if [these holy men] vouchsafed to accept their alms. Hence it came to pass that they were enriched beyond measure, and endowed with immense possessions. . . . But, when the poison of wealth was infused into their veins, the monks, fattened and stuffed and amplified with fields and vineyards, tithes and other revenues, manors and towns and innumerable possessions, began in most cases to kick against the pricks. Heavy with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this world, they mingled among the gentiles and learned their works; they joined themselves unto Baal-Peor and ate the sacrifices of the dead; their gold became dim, their most fine gold was changed, the stones of their sanctuary were poured out in the top of every street; they that were brought up in scarlet embraced dunghills. The Lord God of hosts called to weeping and to mourning and to baldness and to girding with sackcloth; and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine! Therefore are they now made contemptible to God and odious to man, and their goods are stolen and scattered, since kings and princes are as ready now to take away as they once were to give. Thus, then, in the beginning poverty begat religion; religion begat wealth; wealth destroyed<sup>1</sup> religion; and this destruction brought them to a poverty no longer voluntary but enforced; and so the head is come round again to the tail. Yet some of them, like the fleece that was drenched with dew on the dry threshing-floor, like pearls amid dung, like wheat among chaff, or lilies among thorns, like Lot in Sodom or Job in the land of Uz, like a fire-brand plucked

<sup>1</sup> The editor rightly reads *destruxerunt* here for the *induxerunt* of his MS.

out of the burning or grapes when the vintage is ended, by so much as they built the more firmly with square stones when the bricks of their house are fallen down, by so much the more are they proved and, as gold tried in the furnace, have they been pleasing unto the Lord. All this we have said, saving peace and our reverence for certain holy and venerable monasteries of this Order, which yet persevere in their purpose of honesty and laudable conversation and in strictness of religion. Such are the Cluniacs in their head-house [of Cluny] and in certain of their members which are not dissonant from that head, as at St-Martin-des-Champs at Paris. With these we must reckon also the religious monks of Canterbury in England, those of Afflighem in Brabant, and the black nuns of Fontevraud with certain other communities of Black Monks devoted to God; whose charity and humility, assiduous labours and almost insupportable burdens He alone knoweth who giveth them patience and perseverance, in order that, while the rest are fainting by the way, these may hasten towards the crown that is laid up for them, and reach the goal for which they yearn.

Two pages onwards (p. 320) he gives similar praise to the few Austin canons who rivalled the good Benedictines, and appor-tions similar blame to those who (as his words imply) formed the majority. There is another very significant sentence at the end of p. 332, implying the frequency of monastic incontinence. But his bitterest vials of wrath are reserved for the sinners among those Austin canons into whose hands most of the hospitals had come by this time. The real hospital-attendant, he points out, leads a life of "almost intolerable" self-denial:

but this holy rule of hospitality, pleasing unto God, hath been so corrupted in many [*pluribus*] places and houses, and so miserably reduced almost to naught, that a sordid and detestable congregation of reprobates not only displeaseth all those who see their wickedness most clearly, but stinketh also in the nostrils of God. For, under pretext of hospitality and dissembled piety, they are become beggars, extorting money by their importunities, with lies and deceits and every possible trick, feeding themselves and caring not for the poor.

Sometimes, whether legally or by forgery,

through letters of indulgence, which they abuse for filthy lucre's sake, they get much filthy gain. . . . And these filthy gains they spend in the most filthy fashion, in rioting and drunkenness, and other consequent deeds which they commit darkly in dark and secret places, and which, though they blush not to do, we are ashamed here

to name. Meanwhile, keeping nothing of the institutions of their Rule save the outward habit, they receive almost all newcomers simoniacally [for money]... They turn these houses of hospitality and piety into dens of thieves, brothels of harlots, and synagogues of Jews. Yet this pestilent corruption, this detestable hypocrisy, hath not invaded all hospitals; for there are some regular congregations and chief communities, or principal hospitals, wherein the fervour of charity hath not failed, nor the unction of piety nor the beauty of honesty nor the strictness of discipline. Such are the hospitals of the Holy Ghost at Rome, St Samson at Constantinople [and eight others which he specifies by name, together with *quaedam alia*].

And he is as clear in his own mind about the causes of this decay, as of the decay itself. We have seen how definitely he anticipates and refutes the sophistical pleas which are sometimes repeated by modern apologists, and how clearly he recognizes that, whereas monastic indiscipline naturally leads to enforced poverty, monastic discipline has seldom flourished without voluntary poverty; so that wealthy endowments have corrupted monachism<sup>1</sup>. Wealth and greed are the prime causes of decay, but there is another which he recognizes no less clearly and exposes with almost equal emphasis, *i.e.* the absence of a general and efficient visitation-system. The Cistercians, by the help of such a system, had kept themselves comparatively sound. To the reformed Austin canons again, he bears the same testimony (pp. 322, 325).

Since nothing does more to keep the virtue of Religion, where there are many congregations and monasteries, than the direction of one superior who, as chief and supreme head, rules and restrains the various members from above, so these [Arroasian canons] come together once a year to hold a general council under their chief abbot... Whence we may find a plain example for monasteries and congregations which, depending on one single abbot and looking for guidance to one superior only, often fall when he falls, having no outward prop; as it is written in Ecclesiastes, "Woe unto him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up"; and again, "a threefold cord is not quickly broken"; and again in Proverbs, "a brother helping a brother is as a fortified city." But if, when the head [of a monastery] is corrupt, the members have recourse to secular prelates, they frequently fall from Scylla

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 331-2, where he exposes the fallacies of those who plead for rich endowments, and shows how their arguments betray their lack of real faith.

to Charybdis; for some prelates rejoice the more in the dissensions of Religious, that they can thus fish all the more easily in the troubled waters, fearing not to seize this occasion of extorting money from one party or the other. Or, if by chance the Religious find just and godfearing prelates, who, withholding their hands from all bribes, refuse to foment their party-quarrels for lucre's sake, yet at last [the malcontents], by appealing to the Pope, gladly find occasion for divagations and wanderings abroad; and both parties, burdening their monastery with useless expenses, oftentimes consume their ample revenues and abundant possessions.

This complaint is strengthened by his bitter chapter *De Negligentia et Peccatis Praelatorum* (p. 270): "Dumb dogs, who keep not the wolf away from the fold committed to their charge, lest men should cast in their teeth 'Physician, heal thyself'... crucifying the son of God afresh...by night in the brothel, next morning at the altar."

Here, again, our medieval cardinal forestalls the modern apologist. We shall see how Innocent III took Jacques de Vitry's view, and strove, though with only partial success, to bind the Benedictines together by a visitatorial system. One of the most learned of modern Benedictines, Dom Ursmer Berlière, evidently regrets that this process was never carried out to its logical conclusion, and that his own Order has never had a single Chapter General for visitatorial purposes<sup>1</sup>. But this view is not popular with his English brethren, who, while maintaining with perfect truth that their Founder anticipated no such necessity, argue with more doubtful justice that a stricter organization would not have worked for the health of the Order. Abbot Butler pleads strongly for this contention<sup>2</sup>, but he does so from the standpoint of a writer who frequently ignores the direct testimony of medieval documents. When in Chapters xvii ff., we come to consider these in closer detail, the reader will be able to judge whether monachism on the great medieval scale could possibly have been kept in permanent health under that lax internal organization, and that very imperfect external control, which is not only described by Jacques de Vitry and other contemporaries, but also mirrored in the official documents of

<sup>1</sup> *Revue bénédictine*, 1891, pp. 256, 262, and 1892, p. 546; also pp. 39, 156-9 of his articles in the volume for 1920.

<sup>2</sup> *Benedictine Monachism*, pp. 210 ff.



the time. Critics have sometimes complained that the third chapter of Sabatier's *Life of St Francis* draws too dark a picture of the need for reform in Church and society when Francis came forward. I cannot help thinking that farther research, when the results have been digested and the dust of conflict has blown away, will show Sabatier to have erred, if at all, on the favourable side.

Nearly all of this was written before I had the opportunity of consulting the judgement of Dom Ursmer Berlière, who, among all the contributors to the *Revue bénédictine*, is best equipped to write on this subject<sup>1</sup>. He records the impressions derived from an exhaustive survey of Innocent III's register (1198-1216).

It would be a grave error [he writes], to believe that discipline had not maintained itself at a fervent pitch in a large number of monasteries. The very autonomy of these houses guarded them against the failings of the world around them, when they had the good fortune to be ruled by virtuous and energetic heads. Affligem in Belgium, the monasteries of the Trèves district and Lorraine, those of Normandy, to quote only some examples, enjoyed a well-deserved reputation. The same may be said of the monasteries of England, Bavaria, and part of Austria (p. 25).

But, wherever things went ill, remedies were difficult.

The feudal constitution of the great monastic properties, the indisputable validity of customary law, the slowness and frequent difficulty of papal interference, added to the facts that ecclesiastical recruitment was more and more invaded by material preoccupations, that the offices of Church and cloister were more and more treated from the standpoint of revenue, and that national particularism was developing—all these things went far to neutralize and paralyse direct papal action (p. 22).

The Cistercians as a whole were still vigorous; "but Innocent's practised eye discovered, in that radiant splendour, something like shadows and latent seeds of decay." The Cluniacs had had a great past, but now "feudal Cluny was eclipsing the religious Cluny of former days...it had crystallized into an excessive conservatism; religious vigour was gradually deserting it"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Revue bénédictine*, 1920, pp. 22 ff., 145 ff.; two articles on *Innocent III et la réorganisation des monastères bénédictins*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Innocent's own words to the Chapter General of Cluny, lib. xvi, ep. 6 P.L. vol. 216, col. 791.

(pp. 23-4). Thus, side by side with real monastic prosperity, there was already widespread decay.

Innocent's letters contain plain and numerous proofs of the decay, both financial and disciplinary, which has attacked a very large number of Benedictine houses in different parts of Christendom (p. 26).

He was able to ascertain a fairly general state of debt, almost always accompanied by a lowering of discipline (p. 36).

The open sore of that time was luxury, private property, and independence. If the abbots behave rather as *grands seigneurs* than as monks, it is very much to be feared that the cloisterers, in their separate offices, imitate this example (p. 41).

And:

Laudable and necessary as were the measures which the pope decreed, they did not touch the roots of the evil. The fact is that the abbots [of the great houses] enjoyed unlimited power, removed from all superior jurisdiction except the pope's, which circumstances often rendered inefficacious or impossible; that they had become great feudal lords, powerful barons, real princes, constantly entangled in worldly life, and caring less for discipline than for the extent and splendour of their government; more apt to gather a *clientèle* of rascals and men at arms than to promote the well-being of the monks and their tenants; obliged to shut their eyes to abuses in the community, in order to get approving or conniving silence for the irregularities of their own procedure. There it was that the root of the evil lay; and nothing remedied that. Honorius III [1216-27], Gregory IX [1227-41] multiplied monitions and reforming decrees; these will be duly received and registered, but nothing will be modified. The monastery, a victim of feudalism, will thereby lose both the purity of its religious life and its financial prosperity (p. 42).

The one definite step in advance was the creation of something like a regular visitation system; to this, upon which Dom Berlière's other writings have thrown so much light, I shall come in Chapters XVII ff.; let us hear now only his concluding paragraph:

Innocent III's work was pursued with ardour by his immediate successors Honorius III and Gregory IX, and on exactly the same principles; but a revolution was working in the bosom of society. Cîteaux was still in favour with the popes; but we feel the growing influence of the Mendicant Orders, even in the work of monastic reform. The same evils and the same abuses demand the same remedies. The feudalization of the monasteries is too general, the

action of Rome is in many circumstances too weak, to produce durable and serious results. Ecclesiastical society is preoccupied with things touching its own interests too nearly, while lay society is already too exacting and encroaching for the Heads of the Church to concentrate their attention exclusively upon the disciplinary side of monastic institutions. Innocent IV [1243-54] tried still to struggle, but often in vain; and, after him, we feel that the impulse given by Innocent III has slackened, and that the work of monastic restoration is no longer directed by an energetic will, conscious of the end which must be attained<sup>1</sup>.

It would be difficult to sound more clearly the keynote of that half-century to which I now come in the chapters immediately herefollowing. With the entirely different reforms of the fifteenth century, briefly alluded to by Dom Berlière on p. 22, I deal in my fourth volume.

<sup>1</sup> *L.c.* p. 159. Compare the formidable list of great monasteries in decay which Dom Berlière has gathered on pp. 37 ff.

## CHAPTER VII

### PRECURSORS OF ST FRANCIS

HERE, then, at the turn of the twelfth century into the thirteenth, we are in a period of considerable unrest, both inside and outside the monastery. Within, it is still possible for the majority to "sit far in the interior, wrapt in their warm flannels and delusions, inaccessible to all voice of Fact"; but, without, the world is drifting away from the cloister. The peasant had often some real excuse for anticlericalism, and even for irreligion; more and more he felt and resented his abasement, by contrast with the citizen, who himself had but recently struggled up from bondage, and whom Church lords, as well as lay lords, were sometimes attempting to enslave again. And here, as often, freethought flourished, especially at the two extremes of the social scale. Rough lords often disbelieved because they hated Church discipline; quick-witted scholars at the universities, because they had read the Arabian translators and commentators of Aristotle; they now knew too much to accept certain factors in the current teaching, and passed on to reject the whole. The peasant, at the other end, often knew too little, and was too heavy-witted to think or feel as the Church required him. Men of all classes frequently felt that the institutional Church was not really doing the best work that might be fairly expected of it, just as they felt a century ago about our great Public Schools. There were some whom she evidently did not satisfy, for even the strictest Cistercian or Premonstratensian, poorer than the peasant individually, was collectively rich, and this is why the Cistercian General Chapter was scandalized at the abbot who, in 1180, attempted to raise money for rebuilding a devastated abbey by sending monks to beg round the neighbourhood<sup>1</sup>. Other "possessionates" had done this, but the early Cistercians did not care to do it. Yet often, before the Cistercians, there had been individual monks who revolted against the "possessionate" system, and lived for a while, at least, by

<sup>1</sup> Martène, *Thes.* vol. IV, col. 1286.

begging. Molesme itself, from which Cîteaux grew, began in what practically amounted to mendicancy. Again, in 1092, we have the "five poor clerks" whose association finally grew into the abbey of St-Martin-de-Tournai, and who "had nothing to live upon; but certain religious layfolk carried sacks daily round the town and cried aloud for help for these Poor Men of St Martin; they lived thus for a year from hand to mouth." Shortly afterwards, when a noble woman begged for admission into Religion, the abbot made her prove her vocation by begging and working for her livelihood<sup>1</sup>. A generation later, St Bernard of Tiron anticipated St Francis in his begging<sup>2</sup>, as also in his conversion of a wolf, and in his use of that word of extreme surrender "naked, to follow the naked Christ," which comes already in St Jerome's epistles (no. 125) and was also claimed by St Bernard of Clairvaux. There are, indeed, many natural anticipations of St Francis in St Bernard's writings. His description of his friend St Malachy (§ 43) reads like a chapter from the *Fioretti*; this man who was always cheerful yet never laughed; this bishop who refused to possess bondmen and bondwomen and farms, or any endowment whatsoever, not even a house of his own. Or, again, that passage from Bernard's third Nativity Sermon (§ 5), where he takes as his text the rich snoring on their feather beds in complete ignorance of that Christmas revelation which was made to the poor shepherds: "let men learn, therefore, that they who labour not with their fellows deserve not to be visited by angels." And it is not merely jealousy of a rival Order which inspires the author of the Dominican *Vitae Fratrum* to claim the Virgin Mary's preference for "those brethren upon whom there pressed, for man's salvation, heavier labours than those which lie upon other Religious who save their own souls individually—*qui se singulariter salvant*—labours heavier, but more fruitful, and filled with ineffable joy"<sup>3</sup>.

For the world of 1200 was broadening fast, and it is the distinction of the age at which we are now arrived, that the laity themselves are beginning to show an example of Christian revival, not only individually but collectively. The nobility are

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Tornacensis*, ed. de Smet. pp. 535, 545.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 172, coll. 1384, 1411, 1432.

<sup>3</sup> ch. vi, p. 39.

shaken by the Crusades, by the subdivision of fiefs, and by personal extravagance; those same crusades, and the dispersion of noble fiefs, have given a proportionate upward impetus to the towns, especially on the main trade routes. In southern France and northern Italy, where much of the ancient Roman civilization had survived, freethought and heresy were passing from the sporadic to the endemic stage: Toulouse and other great towns of Languedoc, by the evidence of orthodox writers of the time, had been anti-Catholic almost from time immemorial; generation after generation was being born into heresy. But, side by side with this, there were three great movements which started in orthodoxy, drifting only later into revolt by much the same process which turned the later Wesleyans from Churchmen into Nonconformists. These three movements were those of the Waldensians, the Humiliati, and the Joachites. In tracing what these men strove to be, we shall see more clearly what the average monk had ceased to be, and what the friar had not yet arisen to become.

Peter Waldo was a rich merchant of Lyons, the essential purity of whose purpose shines forth even in the pages of the anonymous Premonstratensian of Laon, and of Étienne de Bourbon, that strict Dominican who laboured so hard to destroy the Waldensian sect. The former gives a detailed account of Waldo's conversion under the year 1173<sup>1</sup>. He writes:

This man had heaped together much money by the iniquity of usury. One Sunday he turned aside to join the crowd which he saw around a *joculator*, and was so pricked to the heart by the man's recital that he took him to his own house and hung intently upon his words. Now that passage in the man's story told how St Alexis met his happy end in the house of his father. Next morning Waldo hastened to the school of theology, in order to enquire for the good of his soul; and, having been told many ways of coming to God, he asked the master which might be the most certain and perfect way of all. The master laid before him that sentence of our Lord: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast," etc. Then, going to his wife, Waldo gave her the choice of keeping what she would, either his movables or his real property, lands and waterways, woods and meadows, houses, rents, vineyards, mills and ovens. She, albeit with much sorrow, being compelled to make a choice, fell upon the real property. Then Waldo, from his movables, restored all that he

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Laudunense, M.G.H.* vol. xxvi, p. 447.

had unjustly won, and gave a great part of his money to his two daughters, whom he had made nuns of the order of Fontevraud without their mother's knowledge; then he spent the greater part of his money upon the poor.

The next stage of his conversion is told by Étienne de Bourbon<sup>1</sup>, who writes of the Waldensian sect:

These men are also called "Poor men of Lyons," because they there began their profession of poverty. But they call themselves "The Poor in spirit," because the Lord said "Blessed are the poor in spirit"; but these men are truly poor in spirit, poor in spiritual goods and in the Holy Ghost. Now this sect began thus, as I have heard from many men who saw its founders, and from the priest Bernard Ydros, who was very rich and honoured in the city of Lyons, and a great friend of the Dominicans. This priest, when he was young, being a scribe, was hired by the aforesaid Waldo to write the first books in French which the sect possessed, at the dictation of a certain grammarian named Étienne d'Anse, who made the translation. This Étienne I have often seen; he was afterwards a canon of the cathedral of Lyons, where, falling from the upper chamber of a house which he was building, he met with sudden death. A certain rich man of this city, named Waldo, hearing the gospels [at mass], and not being very familiar with Latin, was curious to understand their meaning. Wherefore he covenanted with the said priests, that one should translate into French and the other should write at his dictation, which they did; thence he did the like with many books of the Bible and with many authorities of the saints arranged under heads, which they called *sentences*. These the aforesaid citizen read oftentimes and learned by heart, until he purposed within himself to keep evangelic poverty after the example of the apostles; wherefore, selling all his goods in contempt of the world, he cast his money into the mud unto the poor, and presumed to usurp the office of the apostles, preaching about the streets and places of the city these gospels and the rest which he had learned by heart, assembling many men and women to follow his example, and teaching them the gospels. These he sent also to preach through the villages around, people of all the lowest occupations. These then, men and women, unlearned and ignorant of Latin, scouring the villages and creeping into houses and preaching in the public places and even in the churches, provoked others to follow their example.

<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotes historiques*, ed. Lecoy de la Marche, 1877, pp. 290 ff. The story of the Waldensians is told by H. C. Lea, *Hist. Inq.* vol. 1, p. 76 and elsewhere (see index). Mr A. S. Turberville, in his excellent little book on *Heresy and the Inquisition*, does not do real justice to the evangelical life and spirit of the early Waldensians.

The rest of the story is only what we might expect from the circumstances of that time. The preaching of these illiterate men generated scandal; the archbishop forbade it, but Waldo and his friends, in 1179, appealed to the pope. He granted their petition on condition that the preacher, in each case, should obtain leave from the parish priest; a reservation which none will blame under the circumstances, but which was certain to cause friction. The movement, growing with extraordinary rapidity, was soon out of hand; in 1184 it was condemned by the pope, and these Waldenses or Vaudois, solemnly as they protested their own orthodoxy, were driven out of the Church as John Wesley was driven in later years. Continuing to multiply with great rapidity, they were often forced into alliance with other heretics, but they still lived on in the mountainous districts to which inquisitors could hardly penetrate; thus Milton's Vaudois and the Vaudois of today are their descendants. Their main significance to us is their Bible-thirst; from this time forward the issue is clear-cut between a section of the laity sincerely anxious for full leave to learn and preach the story of Christ's words and deeds, and a clergy no less sincerely convinced that such a permission, since it must encourage private interpretation, could only end in the ruin of souls. Monks and parish clergy had not been wont to give the Gospels to the people, nor even to preach the Gospel; at the average parish service no sermon was heard<sup>1</sup>, and this first general movement towards systematic popular instruction and preaching ended now in heresy. Yet it had begun in the Spirit, and in real promise. We have the evidence of another unsympathetic, but able and observant contemporary, the famous archdeacon Walter Map, who was himself in Rome when the Waldensian deputation came to Alexander III. "These men," writes Map, "have no fixed abode, and go about two by two, barefooted and without linen undergarments, without possessions, holding all in common as the Apostles did, following naked in the footsteps of the naked Christ." Thus far, we have what might be a description

<sup>1</sup> This was brought out long ago by Lecoy de la Marche and others; the fullest and most recent evidence may be found in Dr G. R. Owst's *Preaching and Preachers in the Middle Ages*. For Étienne's acknowledgement of the accurate Bible-knowledge of the Waldensians, see p. 308, printed in ch. xxiii of *From St Francis to Dante*, and in the 7th of *Medieval Studies*.



of St Francis and his companions, trudging to Rome past the walls of great cities and castles and abbeys, intent only on that which had absorbed Jerome's and Bernard's soul:

And to the lord Pope they presented a book written in French, wherein were the text and [authorized] gloss of the Psalter and of many books both of the Old and of the New Testament. These men besought with much earnestness that they might be confirmed in authority to preach; for they thought themselves experienced, whereas they were scarce beginners.

The pope told Walter to test them:

I began, therefore, by putting to them the easiest questions, whereof no man ought to be ignorant, (knowing that an ass, when he has thistles to munch, makes little account of a lettuce), "Do ye believe in God the Father?" They answered, "We believe." "And in the Son?" "We believe." "And in the Holy Ghost?" "We believe." Again, "in the Mother of Christ?" And they, again, "We believe." So all present mocked them with shouts of derision, and they departed in confusion<sup>1</sup>.

Popes and prelates, in a critical mood, might well laugh this down, but it may be doubted whether the average country priest and his congregation would have avoided the pitfall<sup>2</sup>. However, whether we sympathize with the simpletons or with the arch-deacon, we may see how the incident foreshadows a breach between the Waldensians and the hierarchy as eventually inevitable.

The Humiliati of Milan came to a similar end, though their origins were different<sup>3</sup>. According to the story generally accepted until recently, they began under high Church patronage,

<sup>1</sup> *De Nugis*, C.S. p. 65; ed. James, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Here, for instance, is the Latin couplet with which a University sermon began at Oxford in the fifteenth century, and which is printed by Dr Owst (*l.c.* p. 318):

"Per consueta suffragia pulsentur mente pia  
Pater, proles deifica, spiramen cum maria."

"Let [these] be importuned with pious mind through the accustomed prayers; the Father, the Divine Son, the Spirit, with Mary." Cf. p. 139 of my first volume.

<sup>3</sup> Tiraboschi collected all the original documents he could find, *Vetera Humiliatorum Monumenta* (Milan, 1766). The best account until recently was that in Herzog-Hauck, *Realencyclopädie*, s.v.; cf. Karl Müller, *Anfänge*, u.s.w. pp. 162 ff. But, in 1911, L. Zanon published a much fuller study, *Gli Humiliati etc.* (Milan, Hoepli); the account in my text follows the abstract of this book given by Dom. Ū. Berlière in *Revue bénédictine*, 1911, p. 413\*; wherever I translate directly, it is from him.

and St Bernard gave them a Rule in 1135. But the latest research seems to prove that their first foundation was on what the Church regards as a heretical basis. Zanon holds that

their origin must be sought in the struggle of the Italian proletariat against the rich *mercatores*, and in that general state of unrest through which this country passed in the eleventh century. Not being able to create a trade-union under civil law, they formed a religious league which grouped the starving workmen and their families; they organized themselves in a gild with religious, economic, and social aims. That breath of revolt against the Church which agitated the sects passed also over the Humiliati; the Cathari or Patarini of Milan came partly under their influence, and part broke off to form the autonomous group of *Poor Lombards*, which for some time was fairly closely connected with the Waldenses. One group remained faithful to the Roman Church, and to the commands of Lucius III and Innocent III. The latter gave them a Rule, borrowed partly from St Benedict's, partly from St Augustine's.

Gradually this Order developed a threefold division: (1) semi-monastic brethren and sisters analogous to the well-known Beghards and Béguines; (2) a lay group, answering to the Tertiaries of St Francis and St Dominic, and finally (3) a clerical branch for ecclesiastical services. The first two groups worked in combination, mainly at weaving; "originally, they fought against the ring of *negotiatores* who were introducing into Italy the fine woollen stuffs of England and Flanders." The contemporary Premonstratensian of Laon thus described them: "They live a religious life at home in their own families, abstain from lying, swearing and lawsuits, go simply clad, and champion the Catholic faith"<sup>1</sup>. But in 1179 the pope forbade their preaching in public; the Laon chronicler tells us that they disobeyed and allowed themselves to fall under excommunication. Thenceforward they allied themselves with the Waldenses, with whom they were expressly condemned in 1184; it was only a fraction to which Innocent III gave the Rule in 1201<sup>2</sup>. These

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Laudun. M.G.H.* vol. xxvi, p. 449.

<sup>2</sup> The story of the Humiliati is calculated to correct the exaggerated stress which Father Cuthbert lays upon the originality of the Franciscan Tertiaries (*St Francis of Assisi*, 1912, pp. 284 ff.). Father Cuthbert ascribes the Tertiaries' prohibition of oaths to the statesmanship of the future Gregory IX as a measure "calculated to strike a mortal blow to the degenerate feudal conception of society which bound men to fight for their party whether the cause be just or unjust" (p. 285). This ignores three important considerations:

orthodox Humiliati, though they lasted on until after 1560, were always far less numerous than their rivals, the Waldenses, the Beghards and Béguines, and (later) the Tertiaries of the Friars<sup>1</sup>.

All these movements point to a violent, though often vague and scarcely articulate, social and religious ferment among the multitude. As men grew more civilized, as the trader and artisan began to swamp the feudal element, it was natural that they should struggle for an open Bible and for liberty of preaching, and that they should implicitly condemn monachism as too self-centered and too far aloof from the multitudes that needed salvation<sup>2</sup>. The Middle Ages had never forgotten that sane criticism of St Jerome upon "a holy boorishness which profited itself alone"—*sancta rusticitas solum sibi prodest*. And the third, perhaps the most important, of these pre-Franciscan movements came from a monk of one of the strictest Orders, whose experience had gradually convinced him that the world needed not so much new forms as a new spirit<sup>3</sup>. "The Calabrian abbot Joachim, endowed with prophetic spirit," to whom Dante gives so high a place in his *Paradiso*, was born on the confines, and literally within sight, of three civilizations. From his native mountains he could see the hills of Greece, where Christianity often ran apart from the Roman channels, and of Sicily, where Jew and Mohammedan worshipped and philosophized under a rule of tolerance. Joachim himself spent a memorable part of

(1) the Humiliati and other pious associations had long since prohibited oaths, and the irreproachably orthodox Petrus Cantor sympathizes with the Catharist insistence on Christ's literal words in this matter. (2) The Church sinned in the matter of oaths quite as deeply as did the feudal lords: oaths were the backbone of ecclesiastical discipline (see e.g. Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. I, p. 154 and note; vol. II, p. 688): moreover, the Franciscan Tertiaries themselves, while forbidden to draw the sword for most causes, were expressly allowed to do so for the Church—i.e. for their own party, just or unjust. (3) If indeed Gregory IX had *political* reasons for this prohibition of oaths, then the Tertiaries were so far on a lower moral plane than the Humiliati, whose Rule forbade them on the simple *biblical* ground of "Thou shalt not swear."

<sup>1</sup> An enthusiastic description of the orthodox Humiliati is given by Jacques de Vitry, writing about 1220 (*Hist. Occidentalis*, c. 28).

<sup>2</sup> For the connexion between these movements and Bible translations, see Miss Deanesly's *Lollard Bible* (Cambridge, 1920), *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> For Joachim see H. C. Lea, *Hist. Inq. in Middle Ages*, vol. III, pp. 9 ff.; E. Gebhart, *L'Italie Mystique*, ch. 2; but especially Dr E. G. Gardner's essay in *Franciscan Essays* (Brit. Soc. Franc. Studies, 1912) and F. Tocco, *L'Eresia nel Medio Evo*, 1884, pp. 261 ff.

his youth in Constantinople, where he saw the horrors of a great plague, and in Syria, where he visited the holy places, made friends with Saracens, and enjoyed their reciprocal charity when he caught a fever, the children bringing him fruit and cheering his convalescence with their prattle. After a solitary Lententide upon Tabor, the Mount of Transfiguration, there came to his cavern a vision "on that night when Christ rose victor over hell," which inspired all his later meditations and writings. Leaving Tabor, he followed from place to place in Christ's footsteps, seeking as he went to heal the spiritual and moral sores of the people, but forced at last, like his Master, to weep as he looked down upon the land that he was quitting, in prescience of the calamities to which it was doomed. We next find him a Cistercian in Italy—first, as simple lay-brother, then, quite irregularly, as volunteer mission-preacher, and finally as prior and abbot of Corazzo, for which his noble birth and learning naturally marked him. He had long resisted the call to the abbacy, and now he found the business duties of his office an intolerable hindrance to his Bible-study and contemplation. A personal appeal to Pope Lucius III brought him exemption from the rule of *stabilitas loci*, and licensed him to dwell in any Cistercian house. He wrote most of his books as a guest in the abbey of Casamari. In 1190 we find him talking at Messina with our King Richard, who was attracted by his fame as a prophet; in 1192 he was in a hermitage, and the Cistercian General Chapter summoned him to appear before them, under pain of condemnation for contumacy and apostasy; but his licence to study where he chose had meanwhile been confirmed by Urban III and Clement III. He now founded a reformed branch of Cistercians in Calabria, building Fiore as the head abbey of the group, and for this he procured Celestine III's approval in 1196. In 1200, he informally submitted his writings, so far as they were completed, to the judgement of Innocent III, adding that, if he died before completing them and procuring their formal ratification, his brethren must correct them and submit them to the Holy See, for "I am ever prepared to observe that which the Papal chair hath decreed or shall decree, and never to defend any opinion of my own against its holy faith." His presentiment was justified: in 1202 he died without having

procured any formal ratification; his Everlasting Gospel remained the unauthorized vision of a solitary seer.

This *Everlasting Gospel* was not the title of a book, but represented Joachim's conception of the spirit of the future, based upon Rev. xiv, 6<sup>1</sup>. As Christ preached the first Gospel, so Joachim now conceived himself to be announcing the final evangelical message. His ideas show how, from his youth onwards, he had lived and thought under the spell of the East—the spell of religious day-dreams. Between Latin and Eastern thought there has always been a wide difference, even in Christianity. The East always conceived the Faith, to some extent at least, as a subject of discussion; the West, dominated by the Roman conception of law, has always regarded it rather as a deposit to be kept intact—*stare super antiquas vias*. God, the Universal Lawgiver, has issued a code which may perhaps need continual refinement of interpretation, but which is essentially unchanging and unchangeable. From this static conception Joachim did much to free himself. Whereas it would be difficult to find any previous Church reformer of his standing who had not conceived his own reforms as a return to the past, Joachim frankly looks forward to an entirely new future. He dreams of a Church not static but organic; his theory is a Theory of Development. The world's history falls into three ages, of which the first lasted 1260 years, from Adam to Christ—the Reign of the Father<sup>2</sup>. The second, the Reign of the Son, shall last 1260 years also; let us remember that Joachim was writing up to 1200 A.D. and died two years later. In 1260 or thereabouts—our author wisely leaves a margin for error—shall come the Reign of the Holy Ghost. The first was the Age of the Old Testament, the second of the New Testament, the third shall be that of the Eternal Gospel—no new book, but a gospel proceeding from the Old and New Testaments, read with purer and clearer eyes: "For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." The first age was

<sup>1</sup> "I saw another angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that sit upon the earth, and over every nation and tribe and tongue, and people."

<sup>2</sup> It is remarkable that the Bábí creed attached the same mystic importance to this period of 1260 years; see Prof. E. G. Browne's *New History of the Bábí*, 1893, p. 288. Was this an ancient idea latent in Muslim thought, to be picked up separately by Joachim in the twelfth century, and by Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad in the nineteenth?

of the married state, the second of the priesthood, the third shall be *par excellence* the age of monachism. Yet it will differ from the monachism of the past, transcending it as the Eternal Gospel overtowers past conceptions of the Bible; these monks of the Third Age will supersede the secular clergy, but will themselves mostly lead the life of the primitive hermits, wrapt in contemplation of the Holy Scriptures. We look in vain for clearer detail; Joachim naturally shrank from too great precision. Enough for him and for his followers was the overmastering conviction that, within the measurable future, a golden age should realize what past ages had vainly striven for, and that the miseries of this world of 1200 marked only the darkest hour before the dawn. In that new world, men should see the truth no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face. Not that this was to be an age of rationalism—far otherwise; it was to be a time of mystic contemplation and mystic intuition, nourished by prayer and psalmody<sup>1</sup>. Psalmody will inspire them to find in their Bibles the Everlasting Gospel. Led not by reason, but by the Holy Ghost, they will have no less freedom than the freethinker; each will follow his own inner light as confidently as any man can follow his reason, for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” And this liberty shall far exceed the merely relative liberty of the Second Age; for, whereas that is the age of Faith, this Third shall be the Age of Love. Unheard-of calamities shall herald it; bloodshed beyond any bloodshed of the past; only the Elect shall survive; and this chosen remnant will form the society of the New World. Such men will have risen above the love of riches; they will not merely passively accept poverty, but positively welcome it, remembering the poverty of Christ. Joachim, who in his own reformed monastery seems to have made no attempt to dispense with corporate possessions, appears clearly to anticipate a stricter poverty in the coming age: “it shall be like unto the age of the Apostles, when men did not acquire earthly possessions or inheritance, but rather sold them.” Another oft-quoted saying of his does not really anticipate anything beyond the personal poverty of the true Bene-

<sup>1</sup> For the importance Joachim attached to psalmody, and the direct inspiration which he claimed to have drawn from it at one of the turning-points of his life, see the Preface to his *Psalterium Decem Chordarum* (ed. Venice, 1527, p. 227).

dictine, yet in another way it already suggests St Francis: "He who is a true monk, reckons nothing to be his own but his lute." Joachim's Model Religious anticipates the "God's minstrel" of Franciscanism; his soul is attuned to the Holy Spirit not by meditation only, but by music also; not only by the Psalms, but by psalmody.

The Third Age, therefore, will be governed by a sort of holy communism, by a natural and instinctive Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Whether this is to reign among all men, or only among those Religious who set their seal upon the period, Joachim leaves undetermined. Or rather, we may probably answer for him: if all the world is to live this strictest monastic life in hermitages, then the first generation of the Third Age will also be the last. But we must not press him too far; his vision is abundantly fulfilled if we assume for this Age of the Holy Ghost a predominance of good equivalent to the predominance of evil in the Italy of his time. Let wars now become as exceptional as peace had hitherto been; let money-grabbing become abnormal, and contented poverty the normal condition; let the vast majority of the clergy live truly after their profession, and only an exceptional minority give cause for scandal; herein we should have already a sufficient Reign of the Holy Ghost; an age which, after long groaning and travailing in pain, would have burst forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Joachim's personal loyalty was unquestioned, but here was a most revolutionary theory, explosive as all living thought must be in a society which is stiffening more and more into formalism<sup>1</sup>. Remarkable from any point of view, his speculations are most remarkable, perhaps, in their escape from official condemnation after his death, and in the negative, if not positive encouragement which they received from three popes during his life. The fact is, that the medieval Church admitted far more licence of thought than has been possible since the Council of Trent,

<sup>1</sup> "The thirteenth century believed that it had realized a state of stable equilibrium, and...their extraordinary optimism led them to believe that they had arrived at a state close to perfection" (M. de Wulf, *Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages*, 1922, p. 268). Prof. de Wulf here ignores, of course, the many critics and rebels; he is thinking only of the orthodox philosophers and the hierarchy.

provided that such freethought was not too plainly formulated and did not become too popular. The hierarchy, like every other human system of government, was here guided mainly by opportunism. Nearly a century before Joachim, a storm was raised in Christendom by Abailard's presumption in applying rational methods to the study of theology; methods which were afterwards adopted by Peter Lombard and all the great schoolmen, and are those of Roman Catholic orthodoxy to this very day<sup>1</sup>. Again, a century after Joachim (1318), four friars were solemnly burned as heretics on several counts, one of which was that they refused to wear the pattern of frock commanded by their General, adhering to that meaner form which Francis had worn, and another, that they would not go begging (as Francis would certainly not have begged) for goods to be laid up in the friary storehouses. Abailard, therefore, was condemned, even as these four strict adherents of St Francis were condemned, because the one's thought and the others' practice had become matters of public scandal, which threatened real danger to the authorities. Midway between them, uncondemned, stands this Joachim whose theories imply the gradual abolition of the Roman hierarchy, and almost (it may be said) of the whole sacramental system. He is not by any means the first medieval thinker to take an organic rather than static view of the Church; even his theory of evolution is to some extent anticipated by Tertullian, and in Augustine's *City of God*. But he was the first to bring those speculations into far greater clearness and actuality, and to kindle men's minds—if only those of a limited group—to the idea of an evolution which implies (if we follow his words to their conclusion) an Origin of Species in Christianity. Tocco is inclined to trace this tendency to Manichaean influences imbibed partly from the Greeks. Greece did certainly influence him. He puts St John (whom he regards as the founder of the Greek Church) above St Peter; he emphasizes the greater diligence of the Greek clergy in Bible-study, and their stronger tendency towards the contemplative type; on only one capital point does he feel the West definitely superior—in its stricter legislation as to clerical celibacy. But his main theories would

<sup>1</sup> The essential rationalism of the scholastic method is admirably drawn out by Dean Inge in his essay on Newman (*Outspoken Essays*, 1920, p. 189).



seem to owe far more to Islam, which essentially rests upon this idea of successive revelations, each complementing and to a great extent superseding its predecessor, and all culminating finally in the Prophet. Joachim certainly wrote far more freely in his own corner of Calabria, if he did not think more freely, than he could have done at the University of Paris. In his speculations, as in the spiritual struggles of Othloh of St Emmeram and a few other similar documents, we get a glimpse of the abysses which must often have yawned before the monastic mind. "In silence and in hope shall be thy strength"; that text brought supreme comfort to St Bernard. But in less balanced minds such enforced silence does not always engender hopes; weariness and melancholy are constantly specified among the worst trials of the cloister, and it needed a strong mind to insist unflinchingly upon the hope that lies beyond. The Waldenses and Humiliati show us a laity struggling for reality in religion, and trying to tread that narrow way which the average monk had ceased to tread. Joachim shows us the higher monasticism, conscious of its past failures, and struggling to become once more the regenerator of human society. In his attitude towards the insufficiency of the then Benedictinism, as in his sympathy with the poor, he is a true forerunner, if not an actual teacher, of St Francis.

On the first of these subjects he writes explicitly in his *Exposition of the Apocalypse*, commenting upon Rev. iii, 4-7 (ed. Venice, 1527, fols. 80 ff.). There he tells us that there are many *plura*—monasteries founded in the name of St Benedict,

wherein some chapters of the Rule are so abolished [*absorta*] as though the saint had never published them; I speak especially of manual labour, of abstinence in food and drink. It is well-known that, wishing to become rich under the Rule of poverty, they have become delicate and tender, feeble and infirm, men who must be fed with milk and not with solid food. Nor need we wonder: for who, living among riches and delights, could ever lead a life of poverty, and keep his purpose of chastity among such abundance of food? Moreover, many [*pluraque*] monasteries are situated within cities and villages; here they find things at hand which entice the monks' minds, and (I grieve to say) which sometimes take them captive, put out their eyes, and lead them away to Gaza. I say nothing of the worst crimes, the stench and the cry whereof riseth

even unto heaven. . . . Why then hath this evil befallen the fifth Order<sup>1</sup> (which is prefigured in the Angel of the Church of Sardis), but for this reason, that they have not borne in mind what they have heard and their fathers have told them, how idleness is the enemy of the soul? If they be true monks, let them live by the labour of their hands; let all abstain from flesh-food, save only the sick and infirm; let two cooked dishes daily suffice to the Brethren. Nor, I say, for the infirmity of divers natures, let them be allowed the use of wine, which [as St Benedict saith] is not in truth a thing for monks—let us so use this (I say) as never to drink even to drunkenness and satiety—let the monks possess nothing of their own—let them remember that it is not expedient to dispute of the colour or texture of their garments. . . . and that furs and linen garments lead them astray from the true monastic goal, especially considering our Lord's words: "Behold they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses." These and like commands the Benedictine Order hath received from its father and leader; yet in some monasteries these are as utterly suppressed [*suffocata*] as though they had never been prescribed.

He goes on to expound how evil monks are prefigured in the Raven of Noah's Ark, good monks in the Dove, and he adds:

That there have been such doves in the monastic Order, yet few and far between, is shown in the next verse [of the Apocalypse], where it is added: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white robes; for they are worthy." Although therefore there are many in this fifth Order who knew not the time of their consolation, yet shall the Lord be consoled in his remnant, of whom it is written [as aforesaid]: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments."

It will be noted that, though he is evidently speaking mainly of the older Benedictines, he does not expressly exclude his own Cistercian Order, and Gardner is probably right in supposing that it was this which finally brought him into conflict with the General Chapter.

Joachim writes of the poor on fol. 199 of the same book:

For there are some rich folk, though very few, who have a great household of servants and handmaidens and yet come to the Kingdom

<sup>1</sup> In his scholastic division, the monks form the fifth Order of human society.

of Heaven, because they pity, even as a father pitieth his own children, these others over whose heads they are set in this world; and because they strive to treat these with the same compassion which they themselves hope to receive from God the Lord of all. But the rest do not thus; nay, if ever their inferiors, ground down by the burden of servitude, murmur against them, then, not considering how the Lord of all creation hath chosen these poor to be His especial friends, they meet a little word of complaint with grievous revilings, calling them wicked slaves and boors and perjured, . . . and with much confusion and fear they drive them forth from their presence. Therefore these humble folk themselves, when their time shall be come, shall cover with fear and confusion the face of Babylon, saying, "Lo is this that Babylon, that city of the proud, that of old oppressed the humble in her power? now is she become as it were the mire of the streets, and as the dung of the whole earth, full of all ignominy and perpetual confusion." Wherefore the elect will reward as it were double to this Babylon, reproaching her people with the miseries of their calamity. Nor shall they confound them only by returning like for like in setting before them their worldly injuries, but also by putting before their eyes the pains of Hell, to which that Babylon is condemned for ever<sup>1</sup>.

Whether St Francis took any direct stimulus from Joachim or not, this Calabrian prophet shows us what ideas were in the air. And his influence upon many of the early Franciscans is unquestionable; indeed, over one extreme though not inconsiderable section of the Order his influence became paramount, as we shall see. Meanwhile there were two points in his prophecies which impressed even moderate Franciscans with a conviction of actuality. The Raven of Noah's Ark, betokening the imperfect Religious, wore the colours of the Black Monks of St Benedict; the perfect Religious, the Grey Dove with its message from God, must plainly prefigure the Grey Friar. Again, there was one blank place in Joachim's elaborate scheme, which inevitably whetted men's curiosity. To each of the First and Second Ages he assigns a leading character. For the first it is naturally Abraham, for the second Jesus Christ, for the third no name is given. Moreover, these great figures had their heralds: Adam went before Abraham; Elijah and John the Baptist before Christ. Of the Third Age, Benedict had been

<sup>1</sup> We must not be shocked at this last sentence; it was one of the common-places of orthodox theology that the bliss of the saints in Heaven would be heightened by the sight of the torments of the damned.

the John Baptist: but who was to be its Messiah? When, only a few years after these prophecies, St Francis appeared, was it not inevitable that his disciples should seize upon this vacant niche and appropriate it to their master? Benedict's day was waning and the dayspring of Francis was come: *quasi sol ex oriente* became a text dear to the new Order of Mendicants.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ST FRANCIS

THE Waldenses and their congeners testify to a popular movement as yet immature, which came to a crisis at the Reformation and is beating again at our gates today. Joachim shows us the feeling of bankruptcy within the inner sanctuary of monachism, and the yearning for a new world. That new world came presently in a different form, by a change less catastrophic and universal than Joachim had expected, yet with startling and enduring force, under the leadership of Francis of Assisi, with whose name we must associate also that of the Spaniard Dominic. Different as these two men were in themselves, yet the two Orders soon came very close together by attraction and interaction. Franciscans and Dominicans worked so nearly for the same ends, and learned so much from each other, that they may conveniently be treated together. The Dominicans soon approximated very closely to Franciscan poverty, and the Franciscans to Dominican learning. Other Orders of friars, of which the Augustinians and Carmelites alone were permanently authorized by the papacy, followed closely on the lines of the first two. All four differed widely from the older Orders, and the Franciscan showed this originality *par excellence*. So much has been written about St Francis, and so well, that I must here confine myself to the few observations which seem most pertinent to the general character of the present work<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The original Franciscan documents have been studied and exploited with a care which contrasts very happily with the neglect which some other Orders have suffered. Sabatier's *Life of St Francis*, apart from its charm and inspiration, is among the solidest of modern studies in medieval history; so are K. Müller's *Anfänge d. Minoritenordens*, u.s.w. and Father Oliger's brief history of the Franciscan nuns in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, t. v (1912). Two good lives of the saint have been written by modern Roman Catholics; J. Jörgensen's is weak in scholarship but full of suggestion; Father Cuthbert's, without much originality or width of general reading, resumes very fully and, in the main, accurately, nearly all that has been written about the saint; and it is also valuable as expressing the mind of a modern Franciscan of the strict observance. Prof. A. G. Little's *Studies in English Fran-*

Even the most unsympathetic student must ask himself at the outset why Francis succeeded so far in an enterprise in which Waldo and other precursors had failed; and the answer is supplied by such early and intimate documents as Thomas of Celano's two *Lives* of the saint; the *Speculum Perfectionis* and the *Tres Socii*, which represent (to what exact extent will probably always be disputed) the recollections of his closest companions<sup>1</sup>; and the *Little Flowers*, which enshrine the traditions preserved among the peasants of those remote or mountainous regions where he had been most at home, and his memory was dearest. Of these four the *Mirror* is most valuable to those who can read between the lines; and its keynote is struck in the very first chapter, with which we must connect chaps. 41 and 68. This last, of which the immense significance has already been briefly indicated, must here be retold in full. It tells us how, at the General Chapter of the Order held towards the end of his life, when the Order had grown so large as to be half out of hand,

very many wise and learned among the brethren went to the Cardinal of Ostia who was there<sup>2</sup>, and said unto him: "My lord, we will that thou shouldest persuade brother Francis to follow the advice of the wise brethren, and sometimes to follow their guidance." And they quoted the Rules of Saints Benedict, Augustine and Bernard, which teach men to live after such and such an Order. But when the Cardinal repeated all these things to the blessed Francis by way of admonition, then the blessed Francis made no answer, but took him to the brethren assembled in Chapter, to whom he thus spake

*ciscan History* are admirable. A. G. Ferrers Howell's *Bernardino of Siena* gives an excellent account of the later development of the Order, and much may be gleaned from H. C. Lea's *Hist. Inq. in Middle Ages*. All the most important original documents have been translated into English: Mr Ferrers Howell has done Celano's two *Lives*, and many other volumes have been published by Dent and Co.; and the bulk of Salimbene, one of the earliest and most intimate of Franciscan chroniclers, is translated in my *From St Francis to Dante*. An excellent bibliography of the whole subject has been published in America by Father Paschal Robinson, and a more recent by Prof. A. G. Little (S.P.C.K. 1920).

<sup>1</sup> The fullest discussion is in W. Goetz, *Die Quellen zur Geschichte des F. v. A.* This is a laborious and valuable book, but the author's attitude is sometimes rather perverse, and some of his most elaborate arguments are apt to end in lame and impotent conclusions. In spite of his express disclaimer, it is difficult not to suspect that his views are often coloured by the impulse to contradict Sabatier.

<sup>2</sup> Ugolino, whom the pope had deputed at Francis's request as Protector of the Order, and who afterwards became pope as Gregory IX.

in the fervour and force of the Holy Ghost: "My brethren, my brethren, the Lord called me by the way of simplicity and humility, and showed me this way of life in truth, for me and for others who will believe and imitate me. Wherefore I will not have you name unto me any [other] Rule, whether of St Benedict or of St Augustine or of St Bernard; nor any way and form of life except this which the Lord in His mercy hath shown and given unto me. And the Lord said unto me that He would have me a new covenant in this world, and He would not lead us by any other way than by this knowledge. But through your learning and wisdom God will confound you; and I trust in the sergeants of God<sup>1</sup>, that He by their hands will punish you, and that you will yet come back again to your first state, willingly or unwillingly, with shame to yourselves." Then the Cardinal was sore amazed and made no answer; and all the brethren were in great fear<sup>2</sup>.

With this passage, we may compare others which testify to Francis's repudiation of precedent, and his insistence on the saving grace of his own new Rule (chaps. 26, 78-81, 88). He dwells upon his right to originality: "The Lord would fain have one new and small people, unique in itself and different from all that have gone before." Francis will listen to no counsel of conformity with other ideas which he judges to be at least partly outworn; he reproaches those who "put before my people the example of the ancients, and make light of my exhortations." With all his humility, he was stoutly self-assertive where occasion seemed to require it; for, in asserting himself he was convinced that he asserted Christ. That, indeed, is the secret of his unique combination of originality and obedience. With all his repudiation of tradition, he was never disloyal in thought to the papacy. How far his ideas were essentially consistent with the papacy as it then was, or as it was ever likely to be, is a very different question, upon which scholars are likely long to differ. It may be contended that he sowed seed which, in its growth, was as fatally destined to burst merely static Catholicism asunder as Christianity had been destined to disintegrate static Judaism. But of his loyal intentions, and of his pacific and persuasive methods, there can be no doubt; and, in ultimate

<sup>1</sup> The devils, to whom God gave leave to punish sinners; cf. chs. 67 and 71.

<sup>2</sup> Sabatier, in his notes to this chapter, points out that "the *Conformatitas* gives a remarkable variant: 'And the Lord hath told me that He wished me to be a great fool in this world'—*unum magnum fatuum in hoc mundo*."

analysis, we shall find that this is because the positive elements so immeasurably outweighed the negative in his mind. Most of us are tempted to assert the wrongness of others with far more confidence than we should feel if we were staking money on the rightness of our own ideas; with a few, it may be said that their whole creed is composed of such negatives, reducing itself to a catalogue of their differences with their fellow-men. No Christian ever had less of this than St Francis; even where he most differed from his fellows in fact, he was least ready to mark the difference, so long as the men themselves were such as he could respect. He did the hardest thing in the world in the perpetual conviction that it was the easiest, and that all men, if they tried, would find it so; naked, he followed the naked Christ. And in the completeness of this surrender to Christ he found a perpetual harmony among all human differences; his life was hid with Christ in God; all other human souls rested actually or potentially in the same refuge; all human differences, except the eternal difference between good and evil, were merged in that essential oneness. His originality, including his unique combination of radicalism and obedience, sprang from the singleness of purpose with which he strove to become the exact follower of Christ.

Yet no saint was ever more human; it is one of M. Sabatier's great services to history that he has rendered from henceforth impossible the old conventional portrait of Francis in orthodox biography<sup>1</sup>. The *Mirror* shows him as "poor, despised, illiterate"; the doctor who attended him in later years realized his greatness only at that moment, and remarked to the brethren "neither you nor I appreciate this man's sanctity." Jordan of Giano confessed, in after-life, that he had valued far too little the living Francis. Celano says of him: "Saintlier than the saints, among sinners he was as one of themselves"<sup>2</sup>. No man in this western hemisphere ever succeeded in rendering himself more independent of outward things, not so much with ascetic aims as because he felt that to be the freest, happiest, most real life. Here, again, his mind was not negative but positive; as Professor

<sup>1</sup> This is best realized by comparing Father Cuthbert's or Jørgensen's volumes with any Roman Catholic biography of 30 years ago.

<sup>2</sup> *Mirror*, chs. 45, 110; Jordan, ch. 59; Celano, § 83.



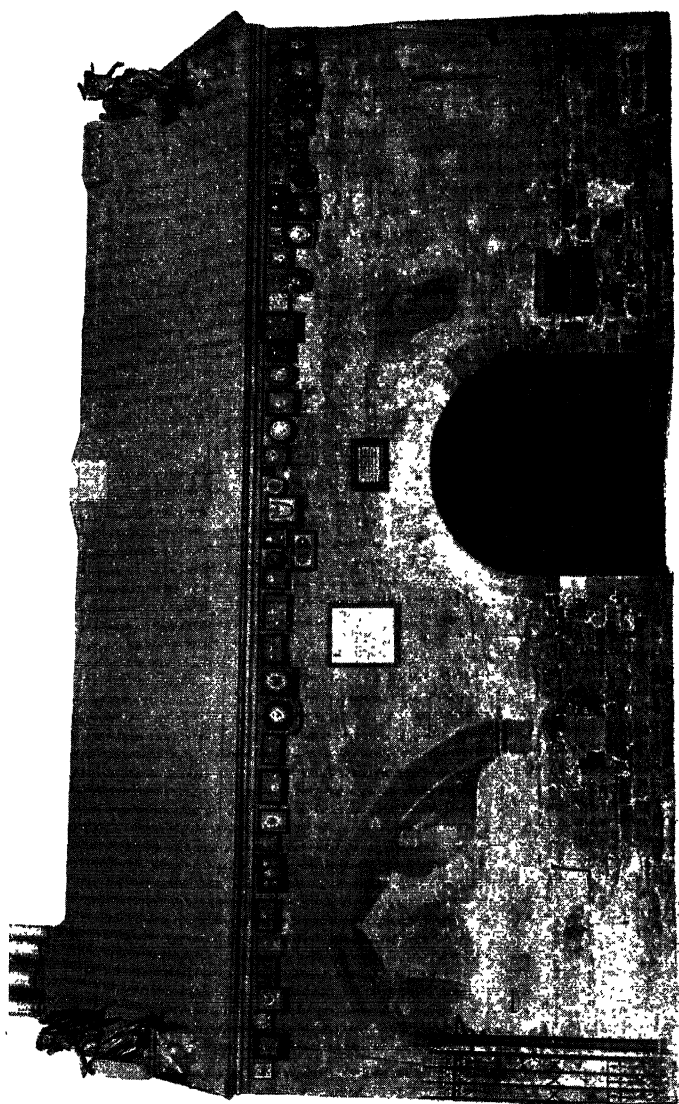
Little has written: "We are accustomed to think of a poor man as one who lacks riches; S. Francis thought of a rich man as one who lacked the inestimable boon of poverty." And certainly—though we must beware here of much random and exaggerated writing on the subject—his teaching and example did much to make honest poverty respectable.

That, then, is the first of the two main reforms which he brought into the old monachism. The Benedictine—even the Cistercian, and even Joachim's reformed Cistercians—had been individually poor, but collectively endowed. They themselves had confessed frequently enough that endowment might prove a fatal snare, but they had never yet ventured out into the cold. The Order of Grammont had come nearest to such a venture; but, after a generation or two, even they had become indistinguishable from the rest<sup>1</sup>. Francis, who had for himself chosen absolute poverty long before founding any Order, clung strictly to the same ideal all through. Christ's apostles, he thought, had no common purse except for the poor: therefore we will have no common purse. And, apart from his imitation of Christ, he supported this by a business argument which strikingly anticipates Thomas Hodgkin's frank confession when he was pressed to declare himself on the question of defensive warfare<sup>2</sup>. "If we should have possessions," said St Francis, "we should need arms to protect ourselves. For thence arise disputes and law-suits, and for this cause the love of God and our neighbour is wont often to be hindered, wherefore we are minded to possess naught of worldly goods in this world." This was as courageous as it was logical, and Francis with his earlier companions lived up to their logical convictions. So long as they were only a small group, and could do so without dislocating the labour market, they lived from hand to mouth by manual labour, treating mendicity only as a second resort. St Francis writes in his *Testament*: "I worked with my hands, and I wish to work, and I wish firmly that all the other brothers should work at some labour which is compatible with honesty. . . . And when the price

<sup>1</sup> For the troubles of this Order during the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries, see Hélyot's *Ordres Monastiques*, s.v. *Grammont*.

<sup>2</sup> *Life*, ed. Louise Creighton (1917), p. 240. "If war is absolutely condemned under all circumstances by the Sermon on the Mount, Business, as we understand it, is also condemned. . . ."

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of labour is not given to us, let us have recourse to the table of the Lord, begging alms from door to door"<sup>1</sup>.

But this was not to burden society; rather this lightened the social burden as few movements have ever done. Without marking the contrast explicitly, Francis fought with all his might against the two subtlest temptations of the older Orders—endowed idleness, and deadness of soul, the *accidia* of Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*. In the face of incurable sloth, even his tolerance gave way: "Go forth, brother Drone!" was his command to a friar whose hearty appetite contrasted with his reluctance to pray, work, or beg (*Mirror*, chap. 24). Nor would he suffer cheerless faces among those who were tramping to glory in his company (chap. 96).

For on a certain time he did rebuke one of the companions who appeared sad of face, saying, "Wherefore dost thou show outwardly the pain and grief that thou hast for thine offences? Keep this sadness between thyself and God, and pray Him of His mercy to spare thee and to give thee the gladness of His salvation, which thou hast lost by the fault of thy sin. But before me and the rest strive ever to be joyful; for it beseemeth not the servant of God to show sadness and a dismal face before his brethren or any other man"<sup>2</sup>.

Yet we cannot quite understand the man and his times unless we take note of brother Leo's next sentence:

Not that we are to understand or believe that our father, that lover of all soberness and decency, would have had that joy shown in laughter, or even in the least vain word; for this showeth not spiritual joy, but rather vanity and folly. Nay, rather he had a singular abhorrence of laughter or idle words in God's servants, whom he would wish to abstain not only from laughter, but also from giving others the least occasion for laughter.

We may discount these words to some extent by reading into them the desire, which even Leo shows sometimes, of separating his hero from all human weaknesses. But, even so, we must see

<sup>1</sup> It is not possible to reconcile the original sources with Father Cuthbert's contention that St Francis put mendicancy even before work. See Sabatier, *Spec. Perfect.* 1898, p. 37, n. 2, and p. 64, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> For cheerfulness as an early Christian virtue, see W. R. Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, 1920, p. 226: "'Joy' as a moral quality is a Christian invention, as a study of the usage of *χαρά* in Greek will show. Even in Augustine's time the temper of the Christians, 'serena et non dissolute hilaris,' was one of the things which attracted him to the Church."

in Francis something of Bernard's mind; the highest Christian cheerfulness must stop short of actual laughter. In a few other ways, also, Francis betrayed something of the older monastic puritanism, into which the next Franciscan generation slid back still further. He loved music even more than Bernard; he won men not only by song but even by secular song: his disciples were to be "God's minstrels," and something more familiar still, for the word *joculator* connotes buffoonery quite as strongly as music. Yet for plastic art, like Bernard, he cared nothing, holding that the poverty of Franciscan churches would do more for pure religion than the costliest elaboration of ornament. Like all great reformers, he was comparatively unsacerdotal. For the priest's person and office he prescribed the utmost reverence, but he contemplated only one Mass a day in his communities, and very few friars of the first generation were in holy orders. In spite of his frequent disapproval of extreme asceticism, he confessedly shortened his own life by ascetic austerities, and he sometimes showed an almost Manichæan contempt for Brother Body (chaps. 16, 61). Moreover, like all revivalists, he sometimes exchanged the gospel of love for a gospel of fear. There is vivid terror in his description of the deathbed of one who remembers his kinsfolk, but forgets the poor<sup>1</sup>.

Ye think long to possess the vanities of this world, but ye are deceived; for that day and hour will come whereof ye think not; which ye know not now, but ignore it. The body grows sick; death draws near; here come the friends and relations saying "make your will." And the sick man looks upon them and sees their weeping and is moved to evil and thinks within himself saying: "Lo, I put my soul and body and all that I have into your hands!" That man is truly accursed, who trusteth and layeth his body and soul and all that he hath in such hands as these: as the Lord saith through the prophet: "Cursed is he that trusteth in man!" Then they send for the priest. The priest saith: "Wilt thou take penance for all thy sins?" "Yea," saith he. "Wilt thou make satisfaction for what thou hast done, and for whatsoever fraud or deceit thou hast wrought to men, as best thou canst, from out of thy substance?" "Nay," saith he.

<sup>1</sup> *Opuscula S. P. Francisci* (Quaracchi, 1904), p. 96. Compare General Booth's confession, which I print more fully on p. 60 of my first volume: "Nothing moves the people like the terrific. They must have hell-fire flashed before their faces, or they will not move," etc.

"Why not?" saith the priest. "Because I have committed all to the hands of my kinsfolk and friends." And with this he begins to lose the power of speech, and so the poor wretch dies... and the devil seizes upon his soul and bears it off from the body with such anguish and tribulation as no man can conceive but he who suffers it... And his kinsfolk and friends will bear off and divide his substance; and then they will say: "Curses on the fellow's soul; for he might have gotten more than he did, and have given it to us!" Meanwhile the worms gnaw upon his body; and thus he loseth both body and soul in this transitory world, and will go to hell, to be tormented world without end.

A passage like this helps us to understand how the Franciscans became the greatest mission-preachers of the Middle Ages, with their power of appealing to the popular belief in the directest and simplest language<sup>1</sup>. This complements that other side of their preaching, in which they pleaded and enlarged upon all that Christ had suffered for men's souls, with the passionate urgency of disciples who had themselves trodden the winepress with Christ. And it also helps to explain Francis's horror of heresy, and the considerable part taken by later Franciscans, after the Dominicans, in the activities of the Inquisition<sup>2</sup>.

In this, Francis was a man of his age, and he was thoroughly medieval also in his trust to catastrophic revolution. For good or for evil, it is more difficult for the propagandist to move an educated nation; this needs long and careful organization. But Francis's peasant-creed appealed to the Italian peasantry with the inevitable force of Rousseau's appeal to the Social Contract and the noble savage, or of the Soviet appeal in modern Russia; moreover many nobles and intellectuals soon fell in with the movement. To them it was a great renunciation of worldly

<sup>1</sup> See the quotations from Berthold of Regensburg, whom Roger Bacon singles out as the greatest preacher of his day, in my *Medieval Studies*, 2nd ed. p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g. Opuscula*, p. 4, where the saint assures his disciples that, even as those were damned who saw the living Christ on earth and did not believe Him to be God, so also all are now damned "who see the Sacrament of Christ's Body,... yet see not and believe not, according to the Spirit and His Godhead, that this is truly the most holy body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." And such unbelievers, of course, infected others and dragged them to hell with themselves. Cf. also p. 91 and § 19 of the *Rule* of 1221, and the last paragraph but one of the *Testament*. As Berthold puts it (*l.c.* p. 23): "Had I a sister in a country wherein were only one heretic, yet that one heretic would keep me in fear for her."

things, and even to the average peasant it involved a very considerable sacrifice. In that essential particular, it differed widely from all other movements of equal force in medieval or modern Europe: the revolutions of 1789 and 1917 called upon the peasant to endow himself, Francis called upon him to despoil himself. And that is one reason why the Franciscan movement still means so much to the modern world, in spite of its considerable failures in its own day.

I have described elsewhere very plainly—indeed, if I am to believe some of my critics, with unfair emphasis—the failure of the friars in some of their main objects<sup>1</sup>. The emphasis would certainly have been unfair, as certain parts of this present work would be disproportionate and unfair, if it had not been necessary to correct the still greater one-sidedness of those who think to do God service by refusing to admit human weaknesses in a saint and his work, and who flood the book-market and the magazines with fancy-history. In this chapter, I need only point out briefly the failure of what may be called St Francis's frontal attack upon capitalism. His exaggerations there were as fatal as have been the exaggerations of any other revolutionary, before or since. Capitalism was a strong and growing force, in Italy especially, when Francis preached; yet no economic historian, I believe, has produced documentary evidence for any check in that growth. On the other hand, medieval friars of the second and third generation plainly describe the increase, rather than decrease, of usury; and certainly medieval Italy had most usurers and merchant-princes in the days when friars were most numerous. Francis made the mistake of the modern out-and-out pacifist; he did not realize how long the good spirit must be fostered before the corresponding evil spirit can be driven out. Ideally, it is intolerable that one man should wallow in superfluity amid a starving multitude, as it is intolerable that men should be organized for mutual slaughter. But the disbanding of a wicked soldiery does not at once create good citizens, and there is much truth in Dr Johnson's saying that a man is seldom more innocently employed than when he is making money. Hitherto, the peoples which have not organized

<sup>1</sup> *From St Francis to Dante, passim; Medieval Studies*, no. 9 (*The Failure of the Friars*), reprinted from *The Hibbert Journal* of January, 1907.

for war have generally dealt still more barbarously with human life in disorganized detail; those which have not evolved capitalism are those which have not had the wits or the energy to evolve it. Francis had no more opportunity for generalizing thus than he had for realizing a Christian faith independent of the material heaven and material hell<sup>1</sup>; his headlong attack upon capitalism was a Charge of the Light Brigade. Worse still, his followers often became capitalists, in a small but comfortable way, under a false cloak of destitution; and we have already seen how in 1318, less than a century after Francis's death, four friars were publicly burned at Marseilles for adhering with heretical obstinacy to Francis's first ideal of poverty. Moreover, to some extent it became obvious to the majority even of St Francis's best disciples that the saint's abdication of possessions had been too extreme. Complete poverty, in the earliest Franciscan sense, would have condemned the Order to ignorance also, and nothing did so much to encourage juggling with the Rule—nothing contributed so fatally to break down the Rule in fact while it was left standing in theory—as the irresistible attraction which brought the friars to the universities, and made them for more than a century the best of university students and teachers<sup>2</sup>. While, therefore, it is true that the friar accustomed society to the idea of voluntary poverty, and thus removed much of the mere snobbish stigma attaching to lack of means, yet it is also true that some friars, for their part, familiarized the world with the spectacle of idleness and hypocrisy masquerading as self-denial. Yet, when all allowances have been made, there remains a very definite balance on the good side. In the earlier thirteenth century, it was common enough for a knight, a

<sup>1</sup> In this direction, Mohammedanism anticipated the West. Averroes, in the twelfth century, insisted that the highest morality was independent of future reward or punishment; Joinville tells us of the old Muslim woman, who wanted to burn heaven with fire, and quench hell with water, that men might do good no longer from desire or fear, but from the pure love of God. But the highest truth lies far more in proportion than in detail. Ousâma's description of his father shows the Muslim at his best during the crusades, but this will hardly compare with St Bernard. The sceptics in medieval Christendom, again, never showed the missionary spirit or the self-sacrifice of the orthodox; it is only in comparatively modern times that Westerners have rejected heaven and hell, and yet lived lives of Christian self-denial.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 139 here below.



rich merchant, or a great ecclesiastic, to have a son or a brother among the mendicants; later, it was still more common for a distinguished university teacher to be a mendicant himself. The knight or judge might not share his brother's ideas about poverty—he might even, with part of his mind, despise such ideas as pusillanimous—but at the back even of the most unsympathetic mind there would remain a real impression of something attempted, something done by the friar, which, on searching our own hearts, we cannot certainly say that we ourselves would have the courage to imitate. To that extent, for two or three generations at least, the direct attack may be pronounced a success. Again, while the friars' renunciation did something real everywhere to render poverty more respectable, it exercised in some quarters considerable indirect force. It set up a practical moral standard to which the older Orders must to some extent conform, or lose religious and moral prestige; for, to the very end, the friar had not only less financial security, but also a smaller income, than the average monk; and therefore, to the very end, he could maintain even this lower financial position only by showing, or seeming to show, that he was giving society value for their money. The rise of the friars, while delaying in some directions the movements for Church reform, stimulated them in others. If the sixteenth century was far better prepared for an enduring religious change than the thirteenth had been, a good deal of this progress must be put to the credit of the friars.

Moreover, even though the direct failure had been greater, it would be difficult to regret in Francis that chivalrous exaggeration which has left the inspiration of such wonderful self-sacrifice. We must remember what may be the slow and cumulative effect of some striking action which, from the immediate and superficial point of view, may have been condemned as a startling failure. The world has never forgotten Francis: for seven centuries social reformers have drawn direct inspiration from his life and words; and, though at certain times and in certain countries the saint's star has suffered eclipse, yet the revival of interest in this present generation is very remarkable. It had already begun before Sabatier's epoch-making work; and one of the most startling features of this revival is its strength in Protestant

countries and in unsacerdotal circles. This is most easily stated, and can be very fairly represented, in terms of published literature. Quite apart from modern lives and histories, a single English publisher, in the last 20 years, has issued translations of five of the most important original Franciscan sources, and the aggregate sale of these five, during that period, amounts to nearly 100,000 copies. This would be considerably swelled by the sales of other publishers, and it is extremely doubtful whether the whole of the rest of Europe has bought as much as this of vernacular Franciscan sources. Moreover, among all these thousands of readers, many are intensely interested in the poverty-problem, not only from an historical but from the most modern and practical point of view. Mr H. G. Wells, in an article on *Labour after the War*, told how many rich men of his acquaintance were adopting, quite naturally, the point of view that they are only trustees for what they possess—public officials from the ethical point of view, though not in the eye of the law—public officials administering their great factory or their hereditary estates in the public interest as well as in their own, claiming for themselves a good salary, but desiring no more than this, and preferring to invest the residue in the improvement of the concern rather than to spend it on themselves. And men are becoming more and more familiarized with similar ideas from a more definitely spiritual point of view. Our grandfathers, when materialistically minded, treated attacks upon existing laws of property as a negation of human justice: when religiously minded, as impious. The tendency now is rather to welcome changes in the name both of justice and of religion. And the mere survival of the original mustard-seed of Franciscanism through seven centuries, even if no grain of it had ever germinated in the interval, might conceivably some day become a decisive factor in human civilization. It might, in such favourable soil as the present, stimulate a sudden growth such as mankind might otherwise have awaited in vain for many centuries. In history, two contrary factors seem equally remarkable; the immense time often required for the growth of a movement; and again the almost miraculous suddenness of its final expansion, when the long period of silent growth is finished.

Again, it is no mere paradox to say that the Franciscan idea

may be as fruitful today in its failure as in its success. If a teacher tells us what he really thinks, we learn more even by disagreement with him than by agreement with a half-hearted man. Whenever, again, a man's actions have been sincere in the past, and he has staked his very life on them, his example stimulates us, by attraction or by repulsion, immeasurably beyond the stimulus of mere passive discipleship. Therefore history is morally justified in the most unsparing analysis of great men's motives and actions. First, the great men themselves would have had it so: in proportion to their real greatness, they invite us not to forget the very warts upon their face. And secondly, only so can we fully profit by their greatness. It is only by an elaborate process of trigonometry that we can infer the present or the future from the past, even with approximate correctness. On the one hand, we must measure the whole height of the personal greatness of St Francis; on the other, the whole extent of his failures in public work: only thus can we pass on to measure what must have been lacking in his methods, as applied to the society of his day. And the failure of Franciscan-Dominican mendicancy, even in its own age, was greater than is commonly represented. The example had no very directly traceable effect even on the older Orders or on the secular clergy. But, with all these failures, it was a magnificent movement, fraught with enduring results; and it was a definite forward step for democracy. We can read this even through Chaucer's satire, and it is admirably brought out by Professor Little<sup>1</sup>. Francis was right; the Lord had revealed to him a way, if not better in itself than St Benedict's, most certainly better as a corrective to certain tendencies in later Benedictinism.

The question of St Francis's Stigmata, necessarily complicated and still hotly debated, will be found discussed in Appendix II.

<sup>1</sup> *Studies in English Franciscan History*, 1917, pp. 53, 98.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE DOMINICANS

WITH the great brother-saint, Dominic, I cannot pretend to deal even after the incomplete fashion to which space restricts me for St Francis. There is a recent and stimulating biography of him by Fr. Bede Jarrett, from whom the critic will probably differ on few points but those which naturally separate an earnest and distinguished son of St Dominic from others who could never aspire to admission to the Order. Fr. Jarrett evidently feels, and probably with justice, that there was in Dominic more than the modern world suspects of those lovable qualities which endear Francis even to Protestants and Agnostics. Yet from this biography itself, and even more from the sub-contemporary *Lives of the Brethren*, the reader will probably rise with the feeling that the two saints differed deeply in many important respects, and that these differences had their value as complementing each other.

They were very exact contemporaries; neither in his beginnings owed anything whatever to the other; and, although most would decide that St Francis's Rule antedates Dominic's by a few years, it is possible to argue on technical grounds for the other side. Francis was sprung from what may be called the merchant nobility; the Spaniard Dominic, like St Bernard, was of the fighting nobility. He was an Austin canon in the important episcopal monastery of Osma, and remained there till the age of 33, distinguished only by his great piety and efficiency in a narrow sphere. In 1201 he had been made prior of his house, and in 1203 his bishop took him on an important political mission to Toulouse and beyond. Here he found southern France honeycombed with Catharist heresy; he saw that this movement was strong in the asceticism, poverty and education of its missionaries as compared with the ordinary parish priest, and even with many of the prelates. St Bernard himself had failed to produce an enduring impression here; other Cistercian missionaries had failed after him, for they could no longer show

impressive poverty. St Dominic gradually formed a small band of orthodox missionaries, equipped in every way to match the best of the heretics; and very effectively supported from early in 1208 by the sword of Simon de Montfort and his pitiless northern crusaders. It is not true that Dominic founded the Inquisition; but it is difficult to believe that he would not have welcomed such a business-like organization if he had lived to see it, for it was the logical result of all his efforts, and he felt that more was at stake here than human life<sup>1</sup>. Endowments accrued to the little band; in 1214 the bishop of Carcassonne assigned to them a regular revenue, and in 1215 Dominic felt strong enough to beg the pope's approval of a new Order, which should be scattered over Christendom and supply the lack of efficient preachers. Innocent III was evidently doubtful of this new departure; nor is it easy to accept as conclusive the arguments which would show that he approved of the principle and only demanded ripe reflection on the methods. However that may be, he died next year, and Honorius III, while approving the new Order by a bull of Dec. 23, 1216, mistook its aim so far as to omit authorization for Dominic's main work of preaching wherever he should be needed; it required four bulls in all to establish the foundation of the Order as we know it. This soon gained the support of St Francis's patron, Ugolino, the future Gregory IX. Moreover, St Dominic came into personal contact with St Francis, though this was evidently exaggerated by later legend, and our authentic notices on the point are disappointingly scanty. How far the saints directly influenced each other, and

<sup>1</sup> This is not necessarily inconsistent with the attitude of St Dominic's successors, to which Father Jarrett calls attention on p. 59. There seems no evidence that they shrank from the Inquisition on principle, but only from the dangerous and thankless office of Inquisitor. Similarly, great Franciscans like St Bonaventura shrank from the task of *controlling* nuns and Tertiaries; there was at times a similar shrinking among Dominican authorities (see Father Denifle in A.L.K.G. vol. II, pp. 417 ff.); but this does not mean that they disapproved of the *institution* of nuns and Tertiaries. Our best guide here is Dominic's successor Jordan, who writes (p. 11): "The crusade began to be preached against the Albigensians in France; for Pope Innocent, indignant that the untamable rebellion of the heretics could be softened by no piety of truth, nor pierced by the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God), decreed that they should at least be attacked with the sword of steel." He goes on to describe the friendship between Montfort and Dominic, and the material assistance which the soldier gave to the missionary, without any hint of misgiving as to the means employed.

how far both were influenced by Ugolino, must remain to a great extent a matter of conjecture; the truth probably lies between Prof. Sabatier's theories and Fr. Jarrett's, but nearer to the latter. Certainly, when Dominic's disciples had multiplied, his Order received a constitution more business-like than the Franciscan, or even than its Clstercian and Premonstratensian predecessors; and it seems reasonable to ascribe this mainly to those same qualities in its founder which had gradually brought him to the conception of an Order at all<sup>1</sup>.

Instinct took him to the universities; to out-argue the heretics, he must capture the seats of learning and disputation. Bologna, the seat of the lawyers, yielded rich fruit from among the canonists, men who stood halfway between theology and litigation, and of whom the more earnest might well sicken of the more sordid element in their daily work. Yet, even here, the more brilliant work of conversion was done by Dominic's disciple Reginald, and by Reginald's disciple Jordan, who succeeded Dominic as Minister General. This need not detract from St Dominic, who showed the still rarer gift of choosing and using his brilliant men, and of whom it may be said, as of Mohammed, that his disciples and successors were witnesses to his spirit of divination in these matters. The little group of converts at Bologna were in despair when Dominic sent Reginald on to Paris,

but [writes Jordan], all this was at God's inspiration. For His servant St Dominic had this most marvellous gift, that in sending [his disciples] hither and thither to divers parts of the Church, as has been related above, he did everything confidently and without any uncertainty of doubt, as though he already saw the certitude of future events, and had been taught by revelation of the Holy Ghost<sup>2</sup>.

It is impossible not to connect these words with the remarkable business efficiency of the Dominican constitution<sup>3</sup>. This gave them enormous mobility and power of expansion: "They have no precinct-wall but the ocean," is the not altogether approving

<sup>1</sup> I regret to have been unable to utilize a recent book which seems a valuable contribution to this subject: G. R. Galbraith, *The Constitution of the Dominican Order* (Manch. Univ. Press).

<sup>2</sup> *Jord. Sax.* p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Excellently described by Father Jarrett in his seventh chapter, from which my verbal quotations are taken.

description of the Benedictine Matthew Paris<sup>1</sup>. Concerning the Dominican it could be said, as a Franciscan said of his own brethren, that the Emperor could not banish a friar, since the friar was at home anywhere. At the same time, this ubiquitous body was severely organized: "Each house was to contain at least 12 Religious, and to be governed by a prior; each gathering of priories (not less than three) within the limits of a nation or a kingdom was ruled by a prior provincial, and the whole Order of linked provinces was administered by the Master General." Representatives of the smaller units met periodically in council at provincial chapters; representatives of the whole Order, elaborately balanced, met at the General Chapters. The chapters alone could legislate; the elected officers were the executive. It was a remarkable essay in representative government, and a definite advance on any pre-existing system. How far it influenced the formation of the English representative system is a question; it is scarcely possible to follow Dr Ernest Barker's speculations all the way<sup>2</sup>. The literary and scientific organization of the Order, which the Franciscans presently imitated, is excellently described in A. G. Little's *Studies*. Fr. Jarrett points out how much democratic feeling there was in all this, but the Dominicans, though far more democratic than the possessionate Orders, were distinctly less so than the Franciscans. This came out very strongly in the dispute about the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M., which had begun in St Bernard's days and increased in intensity through the Middle Ages and beyond. The people were more and more in favour of the new doctrine; the Franciscans took the popular side; the Dominicans, as learned theologians, took that conservative side which had the powerful support of St Bernard. This they maintained throughout the centuries, in the face of much unpopularity. The theologians of the University of Paris, in 1387, expelled a Dominican who had preached against the doctrine.

His brethren refused to subscribe the judgment of the Faculty and were expelled the University. For sixteen years the Black Friars as a body clung to their unpopular orthodoxy, and during that time something like a persecution raged against them throughout the

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Maj.* vol. v, p. 529; cf. vol. iv, pp. 173, 346.

<sup>2</sup> *The Dominican Order and Convocation*, Oxford, 1913.

length and breadth of France. But at last, in 1403, as was the wont sooner or later of beaten theological parties in the Middle Ages, they surrendered, and their Doctors were admitted by the University. Their recantation was conducted with every circumstance of ignominious publicity; the Order was degraded to the lowest place in University processions, and the triumph of the University was enhanced by the fact that the King's Confessor and a Dominican Bishop were among the penitents<sup>1</sup>.

Yet these two, and the other two mendicant Orders of Austin friars and Carmelites, had far more in common with each other than with the "possessionates." In the earlier days, we sometimes find them in alliance with the Cistercians against Benedictine conservatism; this comes out clearly in Salimbene's chronicle; but more often it is the Franciscan and the Dominican who work together wholeheartedly, while as yet the sense of a common lofty purpose dominates all thoughts of rivalry. Each claimed (as the Cistercian had done) the special grace of the Mother of God; in each a story was current that Christ, in wrath, had been about to smite the world once, and smite no more, when Mary had stayed His hand, and had besought one farther term of respite for repentance under the preaching of her chosen servant, Dominic in the one case, Francis in the other. The parallelism between other early anecdotes is very close, especially those which testify to the exuberant enthusiasm of the converts, their sense of a new heaven and a new earth, and their holy joy.

When [Jordan of Saxony was] on his way home to his convent with a fresh batch of novices, as they were all saying Compline together, one of them fell to laughing, and the rest catching on joined in right heartily. Upon this one of the Blessed Master's companions made a sign for them to be quiet, which only set them off laughing heartier than ever. When the blessing had been given at the end of Compline, the Master turning to this man rebuked him sharply: "Brother, who made you their master? what right have you to take them to task?" Then addressing the novices very gently, he said—"Laugh to your hearts' content, my dearest children, and don't stop on that man's account. You have my full leave, and it is only right that you should laugh after breaking from the devil's thralldom, and

<sup>1</sup> Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, p. 528. One of the Dominican doctors had declared the doctrine blasphemous, adding "Do you want to make a Goddess of her?"—*en volés-vous faire une Déesse?*



bursting the shackles in which he held you fast these many years past. Laugh on, then, and be as merry as you please, my darling sons." They were all much relieved on hearing him say so, and never again indulged in a hearty laugh without a good reason<sup>1</sup>.

How closely this resembles the contemporary story in Thomas of Eccleston!

The brethren were always so merry and glad together that they could scarce look upon each other and abstain from laughter. Therefore, since the young Oxford friars laughed too often, it was enjoined upon one of them that he should take a scourging as often as he laughed in choir or at table. It befel one day that he was thus scourged eleven times, and could not abstain even so; but one night he dreamed that the whole community was in choir as usual, and the brethren were tempted to laugh as usual, when lo! the crucifix at the entrance to the choir turned round upon them like a living man, and said, "Those are sons of Corah who laugh and sleep at the hour of chant."...The brethren were afraid when they heard of this vision, and bore themselves thenceforth more maturely, without notable laughter<sup>2</sup>.

And, though it is probably no mere chance that no Dominican record can rival the *Fioretti* and the *Mirror* in their breadth of Italian sunshine and their fulness of Italian peasant-spirit; though we cannot wander through the *Lives of the Brethren* as we wander from picture to picture through Tennyson's *Daisy*, yet the brilliant scholar Jordan of Saxony flashed out into homely sparks among simple people as easily as Giles the Franciscan peasant; moreover, his love for the fellow-countryman, fellow-scholar, and fellow-convert Henry of Saxony, or again for the nun Diana at Bologna and the little German ward, are as touching as the story of Francis and Clare<sup>3</sup>. "This Henry was truly a vessel of honour and grace, for I cannot remember to have seen any more gracious creature in this world." A matron of Cologne, grievously tempted after his death to cast off belief in a future life, was brought back

as she leaned over the chest in her chamber, and read again with pious love the letters Brother Henry had once sent her, and found

<sup>1</sup> *Vitae Fratrum*, p. 144; *Lives of the Brethren*, p. 116. Compare the other preceding and succeeding anecdotes of Jordan's merry humour; also p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> R.S. p. 20, corrected by *Ana. Fra.* vol. I, p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> pp. 20, 26, 68-9, 79, 81.

this word, which is, when translated into the Latin tongue, "Lean upon the sweet breast of Jesus, and quench the thirst of your soul."...

Again:

"O Diana! wretched is this present state which we suffer, for here we cannot love each other without pain and anxiety... Who shall deliver us from the body of this death?... All will soon be over; soon we shall see each other to all eternity in the presence of Jesus Christ, Son of God, who is blessed world without end, Amen..."

"I hear at Milan that thy father is dead... If thou mournest for him, think then that thou art not yet fully dead [to the world]. This I say not as though his death touched me not; it toucheth me indeed, but chiefly for thy sake. Yet thou mayest marvel at the mercy of God, how He taketh away thy transitory parents in the flesh, in order that He may give thee one spiritual and abiding friend."

"Behold! I send you this little girl, concerning whom I appealed to your affection<sup>1</sup>; treat her I trust of thee. Yet I fear to burden thee; but they would not nourish her; but I had pity on her for His love who suffered for our salvation. I would also that some German brother should speak with her twice a week, or at least once, lest she forget the German tongue; for she knoweth German as well as Italian. And say this to the conventual prior, that he should send some German brother; and do thou compel her to talk with him; for now she is loth to speak German, having been from Eastertide until now with Sir Gerard, where she hath heard Italian only. He says she is a good girl, and he has been unwilling to send her away."

One letter may here be given in full.

Brother Jordan, an unprofitable servant of the Order of Preachers, to his beloved daughters, Spouses of Jesus Christ, Diana and the Sisters of St Agnes, joy and consolation in the Holy Ghost.

Be comforted, beloved daughters, in the Lord Jesus your Spouse whom you have prudently chosen for yourselves from among all things that may be desired in this world, and whom, as I hope, you strain and hold close in the arms of your tears and prayers, lest He flee from you. Fear not, therefore, seeing that there is now no condemnation to you, since you have the Lord as author of your salvation, who willeth and knoweth and can deliver you from all anguish and tribulation, and even from anguish of heart. Therefore who among you henceforth, if she be vexed for a time with weariness, if she be afflicted with hardness of heart, if the torrent of devotion be dried up, will dare to say: "My Lord hath forsaken me, and He careth not for me, seeing that I feel not my wonted affections"?

<sup>1</sup> Or, "concerning whom I spoke to your beloved self"—*de qua locutus sum tue dilectioni*.

Far be this from the Spouse of that most kindly Jesus Christ. Leave this to those who know not His custom, to wit, how He Himself is wont to kindle the desire of His Spouses, as I said oftentimes unto you when I was with you. For this purpose your Spouse withdraweth himself for a season, that you may the more ardently seek Him; that, seeking, ye may find Him with the greater joy; finding, ye may hold Him the faster; holding, ye may never let Him go; even as the Spouse in the Song of Solomon, after many seekings and enquiries whether any man had seen her Beloved, at length, finding Him, cried aloud, "I held Him, and would not let Him go." Let Him console you, His Spouses, with that sweetest of answers which He made to one of His Spouses whom Isaiah bringeth forward as complaining of her desertion: for thus saith Isaiah (xlix, 14): "*Zion said: The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.*" The word *Sion*, being interpreted, is *mirror*, and signifieth the holy soul, frequently gazing upon Christ, that spotless Mirror. Sometimes, looking thereupon and feeling her own hardness of heart, she saith: *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.* But hear the Lord's answer: *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee; behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.* Would that ye would keep this word constantly in your minds! I think that, whatever tribulation or anguish came upon you, or even whatsoever abiding hardness of heart, ye would not believe in the Devil's suggestion that the Lord had forsaken you. For St Bernard saith "Howsoever tribulation may rage, believe not that thou art abandoned, but remember that it is written: *I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him*" (Ps. xc, 15 *Vulg.*). For the rest, I commit myself to your prayers. I hope, with God's help, some day to see you and to be comforted in the Lord. Farewell.

Brother Conrad, who was at Bologna with us, saluteth you and committeth himself to your prayers<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> p. 84.

## CHAPTER X

### THE THIRD ORDER

THE first great monastic innovation of the friars, then, was in their ideal of collective, as apart from personal, poverty. The second, more fruitful of result, was in their repudiation of that "holy boorishness" which St Jerome had marked as a besetting temptation of his fellow-monks. Of the good friar we may say, as Matthew Arnold said of his father:

But thou wouldst not *alone*  
Be saved, my father! *alone*  
Conquer and come to thy goal,  
Leaving the rest in the wild.

Indeed, it was only when the first ideal broke down that the friar had become a cloisterer at all, and there was never anything in the Rules even remotely corresponding to that 66th chapter in which St Benedict decrees the regular and almost perpetual claustration of his brethren. Francis and his earliest companions were, in no invidious sense, religious tramps, with all the freedom of the common tramp, and lacking only his vices. To the end of his life, Francis would never admit that his Order possessed a single building of its own<sup>1</sup>, nor would he himself, I think, even have admitted the term *Order*: it was just a "way of life." But there are said to have been 5000 friars at the General Chapter of 1221; and, whatever allowance we make for medieval exaggeration of figures, it is evident that, before the Saint's death in 1226, something like permanent buildings must have become necessary. For yet a few years the stricter friars tried to keep up the old ideal; there are interesting examples in Thomas of Eccleston's chronicle. But, long before the century was out, they had splendid buildings almost everywhere; not comparable, of course, to those of the greatest abbeys, yet far

<sup>1</sup> With the one pathetic, though hardly acknowledged, exception of the Portiuncula—the little ruined church which Francis had begged for, had restored himself, and had made into the home of the early group. See especially *Mirror*, ch. 83; cf. chs. 82, 84, 124. By a legal fiction, the friars were supposed to enjoy this church still by favour of the monks of Monte Subasio.

more solid and beautiful than those of any but the upper classes of the laity<sup>1</sup>. But in these houses no friar was permanently cloistered. The officials of the Order were purposely changed at frequent intervals, as among the Wesleyans. The friar's ordinary work was not within the precincts, but among the people, giving spiritual food and receiving bodily food in return<sup>2</sup>. Changes from friary to friary were frequent; the brethren were constantly sent longer or shorter journeys on ecclesiastical and even political business; it has been maintained with some probability that, in times of peace, there was more intercourse between France and England in the later Middle Ages than in any of the three succeeding centuries, thanks to the friar and the merchant. We have seen how many monks did in fact go a good deal abroad for business or pleasure, but to the frequent detriment of discipline and scandal of outsiders. The friar was professionally bound to go abroad, and found his most salutary occupations outside the convent.

At first, the Franciscans had done much to support themselves by unskilled labour—hewing wood, drawing water, work in the harvest-fields. Having no convents, and for a long time no churches, they were absolutely independent. As lay-preachers and hospital attendants, they were welcomed by all the better clergy. The story of the first Franciscans and Dominicans is one of the imperishable idylls of the world, and we have plenty of cold and undesigned evidence to corroborate it in all essential particulars. It is the early Franciscans who have left us the most intimate records, and we may choose them for our type, following them through such easily accessible little books as the *Little Flowers*, the *Mirror of Perfection*, and the *Three Companions*<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See the description of a Dominican friary in *Piers Plowman's Crede*, ll. 155 ff. There was little or nothing to choose here between Franciscans and Dominicans.

<sup>2</sup> The poetry of this is in Chaucer's *Sompnour's Tale*; the prose of it may be found in the extracts Prof. Little gives from a Cambridge friar's weekly accounts of begging profits, *Studies*, p. 42. How often a young friar might change his friary, and how much of the world he might thus see, comes out very plainly in Salimbene's chronicle.

<sup>3</sup> Very fresh and interesting also are the Dominican *Vitae Fratrum* by Gerard de Frachet (1259 A.D.) translated as *Lives of the Brethren* by Fr. J. P. Conway (1896); they give us a collection of anecdotes similar to the Cistercian *Exordium Magnum*. The writings of Jordan of Saxony, St Dominic's successor, are also of extreme human interest, and well deserve translation.

Very seldom has any group of men lived up to the level of this earliest Franciscan band; and never, perhaps, have more intimate records of such a group been handed down to far-off posterity. These men and women were supported, of course, by their effortless and ingrained conviction of heaven and hell; for in their age even devils believed in the devil with trembling, and believed in God with belief, though they might have no hope. There was, indeed, more freethought of various kinds than is sometimes realized nowadays, but not enough to leaven the general mentality; the great majority of men, so far as they thought seriously at all, admitted that the affliction of a few brief years might earn an exceeding weight of glory in the future. The psychologist may insist that far-seeing prudence played a great part in the world-renunciation and self-discipline of many friars. Yet, after all, what qualities go farther than foresight and prudence and self-control to differentiate men from brutes?<sup>1</sup> and what state legislation, what League of Nations, can do so much to keep the world straight, as a general conviction of everlasting responsibility for our own words and deeds? To whatever abuses the doctrine of immortality may have lent itself at different times in vulgar hands, Francis and his companions were certainly actuated far less by such hopes and fears than by the pure love of God and of their fellow-men.

But, in proportion as the movement extended, it lost in intensity. There can be no clearer testimonial to the extraordinary personality of Francis than the rapid disintegration which took place wherever and whenever he was not with the brethren. Before the end of his life, a large proportion of the thousands who professed to follow him had lost intimate spiritual touch with their leader, and Franciscanism drifted far back into the old traditions against which Francis had revolted. The earliest group had found unalloyed strength in their extreme liberty, but the multiplication of the Order showed that Benedictinism had its advantages. Francis's spiritual valour was partly, it must be confessed, the valour of ignorance. Before founding his Order, he had not gone through Benedict's painful experience of loosely-organized and decadent ascetics—the *Sarabaitae* and *Gyrovagi* who are pilloried in the Benedictine Rule. He had

<sup>1</sup> Not absolutely, of course, but in degree and in complexity.

to learn this danger, and he had to learn also the bitter truth of Christ's words, that many are called, but few are chosen. Mainly under the influence of Cardinal Ugolino, the Franciscans were gradually organized into something much more nearly resembling the older Orders, and Francis could only mourn over this lapse from his first ideal. He and his closest companions plunged more and more into the secluded life of the earliest ascetics, while the large majority not only accepted but encouraged the policy of reaction. Yet the freedom of a friar's movement never became so unreal as his profession of corporate poverty. To the very end, the friars were the most ubiquitous and busiest of mission-preachers, in contrast to the monks, who had preached among the people only at very exceptional times and under exceptional circumstances. The friar first helped and then competed with the parish priest in nearly all his duties; whereas the older Orders were generally forbidden to undertake any such parochial responsibilities, or at least strictly limited<sup>1</sup>. There was never a time, therefore, when the friar did not mingle with and influence the general population far more intimately than the monk had done. And in one great field this freedom reaped unqualified success. The monks did very little indeed for the universities at any time; the friars at once captured the universities, and held their own there to the last<sup>2</sup>. This, however, had been no part of Francis's ideal.

I have spoken hitherto only of the professed friars, the First Order, as they are technically called. But every one of the four mendicant Orders was triple—the professed men (friars), the professed women (nuns), and the Penitents, or Third Order. These last were men or women unable to give up their worldly ties altogether, and to take the full vows. They lived at home with their families, plied their business as before, but undertook certain burdens of self-denial and self-discipline roughly resembling the discipline of the Society of Friends. There can

<sup>1</sup> Except the Premonstratensian canons, who were allowed by their constitution to serve their own churches themselves, and the Austin canons, who might do so with special permission. The monks required a more special permission still; and, though we sometimes find them in parish cures, this was always very exceptional.

<sup>2</sup> See Rashdall's *Universities of Europe*, and Hilarin Felder's *Gesch. d. wiss. Studien, u.s.w.*, Freiburg, 1904.

be little doubt that these owed much to the examples of the Waldenses and Humiliati; the Rule of the Franciscan Tertiaries, composed in 1221, bears a very close resemblance to that of the Humiliati<sup>1</sup>. The scantiness of our early information suggests that the origin of this Order was very vague and tentative, and there is much to be said for Mandonnet's theory that among the Franciscans, as among the Humiliati, the so-called Third Order was really the first. Francis's general call to repentance and a new life (argues Father Mandonnet) did not involve any formal vow or any separation from the world; it was only the multiplication of the Order which rendered this specialization necessary. In the earliest sources there are only three vague allusions to these Tertiaries; the first full description of them occurs in the *De Laudibus* of Bernard of Besse, St Bonaventura's secretary, who wrote about 1280.

The Third Order [writes Bernard] is that of the Brethren and Sisters of Penitence, which is common to clergy and laity, maidens and widows and married folk, who have resolved to live honestly in their own homes, to devote themselves to pious works, and to flee from the pomp of this world. In this Order you may sometimes see noble knights, or other great men of the world, wrapped in mantles of sober black fur, with as little ostentation about their horses as about their own clothing, and associating so modestly with poor folk that none can doubt them to be truly Godfearing. For these, at the beginning, a Friar was given as Minister; but now they are left to their own Ministers in the land; yet the friars still cherish them with counsel and help, as brethren born of the same father as themselves. In drawing up their Rule, as that of the other two Orders, the lord Pope Gregory of holy memory, while he was yet in a lower office but joined in intimate familiarity with St Francis—this Lord Gregory, I say, devoutly supplied St Francis's lack of knowledge in composition.

After Bernard, we get no such full description of the Order until we come to Mariano of Florence in the sixteenth century. Papal bulls and other documents do something to fill up the

<sup>1</sup> The best modern authorities here are K. Müller, *Anfänge, u.s.w.* and Prof. P. Mandonnet (*Congrès Scientifique International des Catholiques*, Fribourg, 1898, p. 183, also *L'Ordo de Poenitentia* in Sabatier's series of *Op. Crit. Hist.* vol. 1). The Rule is correctly summarized, though not quite correctly dated, in Father Cuthbert's *Life*. But (as I have already pointed out) the reader must there beware of the author's exaggerations (1) as to the originality of these Tertiaries, and (2) as to the deep political foresight shown here by Francis and Ugolino.



gaps in our knowledge: but for England especially the evidence is extraordinarily scanty all through the Middle Ages, and the probability is that the Tertiaries never flourished except in centres of denser population, where they supplied in an orthodox fashion the cravings to which the Waldenses and Humiliati had testified<sup>1</sup>. To the very last, however, there were sporadic tendencies towards freethought or heresy among the Tertiaries, as among the Beghards and Béguines. A very great deal of the modern enthusiasm for this Order rests upon ignorance of the original documents. In the days of their most vigorous life, the Tertiaries were almost as much of an embarrassment as of a consolation to the ecclesiastical authorities; bishops and ministers-general bandied the Order backwards and forwards, being more concerned to avoid responsibility for its care than to draw support from its alliance. The most plain-spoken testimony on that subject is that of St Bonaventura, of which Mandonnet alone among Roman Catholic writers, I believe, has faced the significance. The saint, in his *Libellus Apologeticus*, quaest. 16, has to meet the question: "Wherefore do ye [friars] not promote that Order which is called of *Penitents*?"<sup>2</sup> Such neglect, urges the objector, is un-Franciscan. To which Bonaventura replies:

The reason why we labour among others, that they may be converted and go forward in righteousness, is because we thus get fruit and keep our liberty, avoiding all inexpedient entanglements in their affairs. But these Penitents, if they multiplied, would hinder us and diminish our help to others; for they would then demand of us, as a right, that we should stand by them in all their concerns. Otherwise they would revile us for having brought them into the Order when we would not accept their care... If any of them were taken prisoner, or molested by his master or by any other man, he would desire the Friars to take up his cause and to run hither and thither for his liberation, even as the widow came to Elisha for liberation from the vexation of her creditor. If any were destitute of other bodily help, he and others would expect us to provide for

<sup>1</sup> The Strassburg congregation, for instance, had more than 100 convents, in the dioceses of Strassburg, Constance and Bâle. For, after a few generations, a good many benefactors had built convents like Béguinages, in which the Tertiaries might live more quietly than at home.

<sup>2</sup> This was the regular name for the Third Order in the thirteenth century. The *Lib. Apol.* is really the second part of the *Determinationes Quaestionum*, and is so printed in the Quaracchi edition of St Bonaventura's works.

him as his spiritual brethren; and it may be that many would join the Order in the hope of such assistance, especially the women, or Béguines<sup>1</sup>. If any of these women became ill-famed of fornication or adultery, those who perchance love us not would forthwith publish this abroad to our dishonour, saying: "Lo! how these barefoot sisters bring them forth barefoot sucklings; of whom should they conceive them, but of those who are busy with them all day long?" And wanton clergy or laymen would be the more unjust to these sisters in hatred to us, striving either to corrupt them or to destroy their good name, since their dishonour would fall more specially upon us. If ever a quarrel arose among them, we should need to busy ourselves with making peace, lest others should be scandalized... [Our enemies], not being able to grieve us in our own persons, would seek by all means to trouble them. Moreover, they would sully our good name when we held secret Chapters with these Penitents, as though we were celebrating heretical conventicles in dark places, saying that the Church authorities ought rather to correct and punish their offences according to Church law. For even their masters, who are called Provincials, being laymen and sometimes married men, bear a certain resemblance to the leaders of the heretics; and, even though there be no evil purpose here, yet in fact they have lay rulers whom they call *Masters* or *Teachers*, even as the heretics name their own rulers in contempt of the clergy. And seeing that we Friars, who live after a single Rule and under an elaborate constitution, can scarce keep our Order in its vigour, how could we long keep that Order sound, wherein each goeth to his own home, and doeth his own business, having the care of house and wife and children, and mingling in worldly affairs and subject to manifold temptations of the world and the flesh? . . . It was different with St Francis; for then there were many different conditions of land and of time in relation to the Order and to other men; moreover, the world-wide sanctity of our holy father Francis and the first brethren made many things work then for good which would turn out differently in these days and in other lands.

The Tertiaries, therefore, were always near the border-line of official recognition and repudiation, of orthodoxy and un-orthodoxy. Each of the four Orders had its own Tertiaries, but it is often impossible to distinguish these from the Beghards and Béguines, who also were sometimes blessed, sometimes cursed as heretics. If the Tertiaries had been so well-organized

<sup>1</sup> From a very early date the women of these Third Orders were called by this name, which had long been current in the earlier non-official associations of penitents.

and so widespread as is often assumed, it is difficult to understand why we have so little documentary evidence of their influence, or even their existence, in the later fourteenth and the fifteenth century. It seems probable that the movement was diverted, to a great extent, into that channel of "confraternity" about which we hear so much from Chaucer, from Wyclif and from Langland. Those lay folk who, in 1250, would have bound themselves to plainness of living and speech and dress, gave money in 1400 for formal admission to the benefit of the friars' Masses and prayers, and were thus "found in the fraternity of all the four Orders," or at least of one<sup>1</sup>. Even in 1253, Matthew Paris may have been thinking quite as much of what we now call Tertiaries as of Béguines when he wrote:

In these days, certain folk of both sexes, but mainly women, especially in Germany, asserting themselves to be Religious, adopted a slight Religious habit, professing continence and simplicity of life by a private vow, yet bound under the Rule of no saint, nor as yet confined in any cloister. These multiplied so within a brief time that two thousand were to be found in the city of Cologne and the surrounding district<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Piers Plowman*, B. VII, 192.

<sup>2</sup> *Chron. Maj.* vol. IV, p. 278. As to these numbers, we must allow for probable medieval exaggerations.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE POOR CLARES

IT remains to notice the second Franciscan Order, the nuns. Their story has never been adequately told in English, perhaps because it shows the pardonable, but fateful miscalculations of the first ideal even more clearly than that of the other two<sup>1</sup>. Originally, when the friars were few and the nuns fewer still, there had been considerable freedom of intercourse between the First and Second Orders; we can trace this in fragmentary hints amid the earlier sources, and in the preoccupation of later authors to obliterate those vestiges of primitive freedom. There is no reason to suppose that Francis obtained any episcopal licence when he tonsured St Clare and accepted her vows, any more than when, as a layman, he preached in the early days of his conversion: in both cases he was frankly unconventional. So long as Clare was his only daughter in Christ, he committed her to two Benedictine convents in succession; when a few more had joined her, he transferred the group to the little church of St Damian, where the simple convent that was built for them still stands almost unchanged<sup>2</sup>. But the medieval demand for nunneries always outran the supply; and in Jacques de Vitry's famous letter of 1216 he describes the Clarisses as living a sort of Béguinage-life: "These women dwell in community just outside the walls of towns, in different hostels; they accept

<sup>1</sup> In the Dominican Order, it may be contended that the nuns came first in point of time.

<sup>2</sup> *St Clare of Assisi*, by E. Gilliat-Smith (1914), is laborious, often to the verge of pedantry; but it is very confused, and sadly lacking in historical perspective. Father Cuthbert's long essay, in the volume called *The Romanticism of St Francis*, may almost be said to stop short exactly where the real history of the nuns—as apart from Clare's own life—begins. Considering all that can be found in easily accessible documents, and much that has been written by their co-religionists abroad, it is astounding that he and Mr Gilliat-Smith should write as if the real problems had been solved before Clare's death. There is a full and recent history of the Order in German by E. Wauer (*Entstehung und Verbreitung d. Clarissenordens*, 1906); but perhaps the best account, on the whole, is contained in Father Livarius Oliger's Latin articles in *Archiv. Franc. Hist.* vol. v.

nothing, but live by the labour of their hands"<sup>1</sup>. This was four years after Clare's conversion, and it seems evident that the early nuns differed little from the early friars except in the sedentary nature of their lives. But this necessarily changed with time. It soon became difficult even for the friars to sustain their spiritual knight-errantry, and frankly impossible for the nuns. Women were still so little educated to self-control, and society was so little accustomed to respect the sex in practice (or even, sometimes, in theory), that the freedom of the modern Sister of Charity was then impossible<sup>2</sup>. The general opinion of society was clearly expressed in the formal distinction which medieval canon lawyers and theologians drew between male and female religious vows. The monk's vow was treated much as we should treat it; as a matter mainly personal to himself; if he broke his vow, he risked his own soul. But a nun was bound by more than a personal vow; she was the Bride of Christ and, by canon law, her unchastity was a direct offence against her Spouse, the King of Heaven<sup>3</sup>. In conformity with this conception, the Benedictine rule of claustration was treated far more seriously for the women than for the men. Iduno of St Emmeram rebukes his spiritual sisters for chafing at their convent's narrow room: the monk (he says) may go abroad when necessary to buy and sell in markets but not the nun, since "such occupations as these would be most unbecoming even in an earthly queen, and they are far below the dignity of a Bride of the King of Heaven." And, little as the emperor Frederick II cared for canon law in general, he caught once at this distinction

<sup>1</sup> The original in P. Sabatier, *Speculum*, p. 300. In his introductory remarks, Sabatier rightly emphasizes Vitry's testimony to the informal character of both Orders. Compare quotations in Bourdillon, pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> The theory that the worship of the Virgin Mary worked, in any decisive degree, to raise the status of women is quite irreconcilable with the facts.

<sup>3</sup> Gratian, *Decret.* pars II, c. xxvii, q. 1, c. 10: "quae Christo spiritualiter nubunt." Again, c. 14, gloss: "He who corrupteth a nun committeth incest; for she is the bride of God, who is our Father... Also he committeth adultery in that he corrupteth the spouse of another." Cf. also cc. 4 and 61 and the glosses on c. 4, *nec aliqua*; on c. 12, *auctoritatem*; and on c. 16, *ab altari*. This principle is frequently alluded to by ecclesiastical writers; e.g. St Odo of Cluny (P.L. vol. 133, cols. 555, 557) and Humbert de Romans, who draws a number of very curious deductions from it (*De Erud. Praed.* in *Max. Bib. Pat.* vol. 25, p. 526). Official visitors, therefore, sometimes use this word *incest* of a nun's lapse. Cf. also C. L. Richard, *Analysis Conciliorum*, 1778, vol. IV, p. 135.

to salve his own pride<sup>1</sup>. Princess Agnes of Bohemia, betrothed to him, changed her mind and entered a convent: "whereat the emperor was at first somewhat moved to wrath;...but he consoled himself, saying: 'Since this lady hath espoused no earthly man, but the Lord God himself, it is pleasing and acceptable to me; for she hath despised me not in comparison with any mortal, but with God.'"

We have seen how the friars, however unwillingly, were soon compelled to approximate a good deal to the older Orders; we need not wonder that the women had to give way to this approximation still more rapidly. The next contemporary description of the Clarisses, referring apparently to a date some two or three years later than Vitry's, runs as follows<sup>2</sup>:

Many women...came to the friars in compunction of heart saying: "But what shall we do? We cannot dwell with you: tell us therefore how we may save our souls." Whereupon the friars arranged in each city, for as many as they were able, enclosed convents for them to do penance in; and they set up one of the friars to be their Visitor and to discipline them.

In other words, even very early in the history of the Order, the Franciscan nun was disciplined like the Benedictine nun, nominally at least. Sabatier is probably right in surmising that this was not done without resistance, and that some of the early nuns, under Clare's leadership, kept a certain amount of liberty for a long time; but these, it is pretty evident, were only exceptions.

In the history of the Clarisses we must mark eight periods:

(1) Of liberty, as shown by Jacques de Vitry and implied in certain Franciscan traditions recorded in books of later date, but in themselves very probable, *e.g.* *Fioretti*, chap. 15.

(2) Of tentative organization, as in the valuable early writer who goes by the name of *Anonymus Perusinus*. Partly, apparently, convents were founded for the Clarisses somewhat after the traditional, *i.e.* Benedictine-pattern; partly the nuns were drafted into Benedictine convents as Clare and Agnes had been at first; partly, again, a few Benedictine convents embraced the new

<sup>1</sup> *Ana. Fra.* vol. III, p. 184. Whether the anecdote of Frederick be authentic or not, it is equally valuable as a social illustration.

<sup>2</sup> *Anon. Perus.* in Oligier, p. 194.

Order altogether; this had been a common occurrence with all earlier monastic reforms. But all these cases had one thing in common, *i.e.* the Benedictine or semi-Benedictine tinge which the nuns would receive, thus differentiating them a good deal from what we may almost call the anti-Benedictine spirit of the friars<sup>1</sup>. Yet it is certain that Francis, perhaps as early as 1214, drew up a "form of life" for these nuns, consisting mainly, to all appearance, of exhortations like those of his Friars' Rule of 1209, together with a few definite prescriptions of detail. But it seems almost equally certain that even this "form of life" was to be engrafted on the Benedictine stock; moreover, we have no evidence that it was applied to any convent except St Damiano and the few early foundations which enjoyed an exceptional position. When, in 1218 and early 1219, other convents came to be founded, we can see that there was as yet no Rule which the cardinal-protector Ugolino recognized as authoritative. To five such convents at least, on their foundation, we find him giving the Benedictine Rule, *plus* certain observances which were customary at St Damiano; and his words imply that St Damiano also was conducted on an essentially Benedictine basis. A few months later, he himself drew up a definite Rule for the whole Order<sup>2</sup>.

(3) This Rule of 1219 is astoundingly un-Franciscan; it gives the nuns even less freedom than the ordinary Benedictine enjoyed<sup>3</sup>. When once a girl is vowed, "let neither permission nor possibility of going forth be ever granted unto her, unless by chance she be sent to some other convent to plant or build up in that place this same religious Order." Relations and friends might come into the parlour and speak through the grate, "provided that the nun have with her two other nuns at least, chosen by the abbess, who shall hear every word spoken

<sup>1</sup> Oliger tries to argue this away (p. 204); this is the one really weak point in his admirable treatise. His argument here is inconsistent with the facts which he quotes elsewhere (pp. 423, 434, 440, 444, 447).

<sup>2</sup> Probably with the tacit, though not express, exception of St Damiano. St Clare's personality secured her an exceptional position all her life through. There is no foundation for Father Cuthbert's assumption that Ugolino had consulted Francis beforehand about this Rule.

<sup>3</sup> It is given in L. Wadding, *Annales*, ed. 1731, vol. I, pp. 313 ff. How little the ordinary Benedictine nun was subjected to this iron strictness of claustration may be inferred not only from a multitude of separate testimonies but from Boniface VIII's bull of two generations later, *Periculoso*.

on either side." If Confessor or Visitor has to speak with a nun, at least two other nuns must keep them in sight all the time. The priest, at Communion, handed the holy water through a grating hung with cloth to prevent any features from being seen; the nuns never saw the face of the preacher. Their silence was to be strict beyond strictest Benedictine requirements; their fasts were ultra-Benedictine; clothes and bedding were of exceptional austerity; finally, the Visitor set over them was no Franciscan, but the Cistercian Brother Ambrose. No wonder that Innocent IV, in 1247, spoke to the nuns of the "excessive difficulty" of their Rule, which burdened their consciences with the doubt whether they lived up to it; or, again, that Clement IV, in 1265, wrote: "it prescribed such grievous and intolerable austerities that they could scarcely ever be fulfilled even by the younger and stronger among you."

Why, then, did St Francis "accept" it, as we are told he did? I take it, because he could not help; also, he was not prepared to think out a whole alternative scheme of life for a multiplicity of convents. He had taken an intense interest in St Clare and her early companions of St Damian, and did so still, but even his own First Order was slipping out of his hands in 1219; still less, therefore, was he prepared to wage a far more difficult and doubtful war for the control of the Second Order. Why, then, did St Clare accept without protest this almost impossible Rule? I suspect that she more than accepted it; that indeed, she was the true author of its ultra-Benedictine austerities.

It is very difficult to find much originality in St Clare. Contemporaries seem to have felt this. Father Paschal Robinson truly remarks: "In point of fact, it may be said that the sources of the history of St Clare are scanty in proportion as they are plentiful in the case of St Francis." The story how Francis "persuaded her to give a bill of divorce to the world" is one of the most beautiful of the early documents; but all the individuality in it belongs to Francis, Clare simply obeys. Of course, this obedience required exceptional devotion and constancy; but, in so far as Clare is original, it is in this devotion to Francis, and in the originality which she thus takes from him. He is one of the most original characters in history: we cannot expect that two such should be born in one little town



within a single decade or so. All we can expect to find is a girl brave enough to struggle as wholeheartedly after Francis as Francis did after Christ; generous enough to take the colour of his mission; constant enough to follow it unwaveringly for 42 years. It became increasingly evident, however, that the women could not march shoulder to shoulder with the men; the naked poverty of the first group of homeless wanderers was impossible for Clare and her sisters. They must live practically the life of ordinary nuns, of Benedictines. Under these circumstances, would it not be very natural for this spiritually-exalted woman to invent ultra-Benedictine austerities as the moral equivalent of a naked poverty which she was unable to live up to?<sup>1</sup> The idea of such a commutation of penance was essentially medieval; in nearly every saint's life we find attempts to draw nearer to the suffering Christ through self-inflicted pains.

And the first point, the Clarisses' actual abandonment of the friars' possessionless ideal, lies beyond all doubt. It comes out even in the document which Father Cuthbert and others cite to prove the contrary—in Clare's own Rule.

(4) For, in 1247, Innocent IV had given the Second Order a slightly milder Rule than that of 1219, which (his bull informs us) was commonly transgressed. But the differences were very slight; his main object was to enforce a single Rule on the whole Order, and in this he failed; before his Rule had become universal, it was superseded by that of St Clare in 1253.

(5) Some (*e.g.* even Wadding) have erroneously ascribed this latter Rule to St Francis, and dated it in 1224. It was in fact composed by Clare, and is Francis's only to this extent, that chap. VI contains two special messages from him to the nuns, and that the whole is modelled very much on the final Rule given to the friars in 1223. This Rule of Clare's is often treated as a consecration of true Franciscan poverty. The Rules of 1219 and 1247 had allowed corporate property to the nuns, but Clare had for herself obtained a papal "privilege of poverty," possibly from Innocent III and certainly from Gregory IX. She had refused all proffered dispensations with the words "never shall I wish to be dispensed from following Jesus Christ"; and Gregory's privilege ran thus: "As therefore ye have besought

<sup>1</sup> Cf. i Celano, §§ 18-20.

us, so we confirm with Our apostolic favour your purpose of absolute poverty, granting you by these present letters that no man shall have power to compel you to receive possessions." Therefore, when at last Innocent IV had confirmed Clare's Rule, two days before her death, we might hastily assume that the victory of true Franciscan Poverty was won. And so, in fact, Father Cuthbert and Jørgensen conceive it, without troubling to look at the rest of the story, though it has stood recorded for the last century and a half in the standard history of their Order, Wadding's *Annales*. "Under these words," writes Jørgensen, "as Clara was closing her eyes in death, Innocent IV set the inviolable seal of Rome"<sup>1</sup>.

The fact is, that even Clare's Rule, in that very chapter vi which contains the two messages from St Francis, contains a provision which, in its literal sense, clearly violated the early Franciscan ideal, and which needed only a little legal subtlety to justify far greater latitude<sup>2</sup>. Clare wrote:

The sisters are neither to receive nor to have any possession or property, in their own name or through any intermediate person, nor anything at all which can reasonably be called property, *except so much land as is needed for the decency and seclusion of the convent*; which land must not be tilled except as a garden for the nuns' necessities.

And the records show that there was, in fact, even more juggling with these professions of absolute poverty on the part of the nuns than on that of the later friars. Gregory IX, shortly after granting Clare her "privilege of poverty," gave landed endowments to one of the convents most closely connected with St Clare, and Oliger, after quoting other similar cases, frankly confesses (p. 416):

These examples show clearly the double direction taken by the Clarisses with regard to possessions [from a very early date]. For, though there are a few examples of absolute poverty, there are many more cases in which the Pope himself has confirmed or even given property to them; and Wauer is right in his assertion that, in the

<sup>1</sup> *Life*, p. 191; so also Father Cuthbert in his *Life*, pp. 146-7; *Romanticism*, p. 115; and introduction to Lady Charlotte Balfour's *Life of St Clare*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> This provision does, in fact, embolden Mr Gilliat-Smith to argue that there was no irregularity in the possession by nuns of cornfields and vineyards scattered far away from their convents.

fourth decade of the thirteenth century, few convents of Clarisses professed perfect poverty. Various writers [in his footnote, he specifies Fathers Cuthbert and Paschal Robinson] have attempted to explain this abandonment of original poverty by attributing it either to the Benedictine element in the Ugolino-Rule or to the fact that Benedictine nuns sometimes went over to the Clarisses; but neither of these suppositions can be proved by historical evidence... The true and main cause of the introduction of property to the Clarisses is the will and the fatherly solicitude of Gregory IX.

Nor did "the inviolable seal of Rome" preserve even the letter of St Clare's Rule.

(6) For, in 1259, a sister of St Louis founded a convent of Clarisses at Longchamps. With the help of St Bonaventura, and four others from among the most distinguished Franciscans, she drew up a new Rule, which was confirmed by Alexander IV in 1259 and again by Urban IV, at the prayer of St Louis, in 1263. Its express purpose was to get rid of what was "dubious and dangerous" in its predecessor, and its main innovation was the permission to hold possessions in common, like the Benedictines.

(7) Again, in 1263, Urban IV produced yet another Rule, of his own; this also permitted corporate possessions.

(8) Only in 1458 did the Rule of St Colette go back to St Clare's, and this Rule never applied but to a small reforming party within the Order.

Oliger sums up the whole matter very clearly on pp. 439, 442, 443. There were, he observes, "two observances" in the matter of poverty, from at least 1228 onwards, *i.e.* from the time when it was no longer a question only of a small group of devoted sisters at St Damian and with two or three other convents elsewhere, but when the Order was beginning to spread. After a long struggle, the stricter view seemed victorious in 1253. But the difficulties were too great; within a few years of St Clare's death it was evident that her party was in the minority. The majority of the nuns became Urbanists, a minority stuck to the Clare Rule, a still smaller minority followed the Longchamps Rule, which resembled the Urbanist in permitting corporate property. To sum up in Father Oliger's own words:

During the fourteenth century by far the greater number of the Clarisses professed the Urban Rule, though this never completely

supplanted those of Clare and Longchamps. Therefore the Clarisses never attained to that uniformity which was the express aim of at least the Innocent Rule and the Urban Rule, as we learn from the actual words of those Rules. The extreme poverty of the Franciscan ideal survived at least among a portion of St Clare's daughters.

Yet even that "extreme poverty" differed from the original ideal, in that the nuns possessed at least their own house and grounds, by law, and at times something more by custom. In the Order in general, there are early traces of that canker of simony which had infected the nunnery system everywhere<sup>1</sup>. St Bonaventura, writing about 16 years after Clare's death, has to meet the accusation that "many" Clarisses are received in virtue of money-payments, and he cannot venture to deny this outright. Again, in 1297, the Cardinal Visitor writes that "in the monasteries of St Clare, owing to the frailty or the ignorance of the female sex, sisters are sometimes received uncanonically, as we know from the fact that dispensations are sometimes asked for those who have received, or had been received, under the guilt of simony." Those who know medieval Church conditions will infer that, for one who thus tried to regularize herself by petitioning for a dispensation, there would be many who would contentedly go on under what the cardinal called "this poisonous plague" of demanding money for the admission of novices<sup>2</sup>.

The question of the government of the Clarisses proved almost as thorny as the question of poverty. The friars were even more reluctant, if possible, to be burdened with their care than with that of the Third Order. Here also, from a very early date, there were two observances. At first, St Clare put herself entirely in the hands of St Francis<sup>3</sup>. But, as soon as her society had grown beyond the mere handful, and St Francis could not be always looking after all of them, this first arrangement broke down. St Francis then forbade all direct relations between his friars and the nuns, and emphasized this prohibition by restricting his own earlier intimate intercourse with them<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> St Edmund Rich, in the mid-thirteenth century, had to search far and wide in England before he could find a convent which would receive his sisters without simony.

<sup>2</sup> Bonaventura, *Libell. Apol. quaest.* 18; Father Z. Lazzeri in A.F.H. vol. IV, p. 93. Bourdillon (chapter III) is anachronistic and misleading here.

<sup>3</sup> *Rule of St Clare*, ch. vi; *Little Flowers*, ch. 15.

<sup>4</sup> ii Celano, §§204-7; *Little Flowers*, ch. xv; *Rule of 1223*, §11 (cf. 1221, §12).

Moreover, we have even more curious evidence on this point from a minister-general who died about 50 years after St Francis and heard the story from Brother Stephen, one of the early disciples<sup>1</sup>. He writes:

St Francis would not be on familiar terms with any woman... The blessed Clare was the only one to whom he showed any affection. And even her, when he spoke with her or about her, he never called by her name, but simply named her "the Christian"<sup>2</sup>. He had the care of her and of her convent. Nor did he ever cause any other convent to be made except St Damian, although some were built in his days at the instigation of certain others. And St Francis, when he heard that the women congregated in these convents were called *sisters*, was in vehement wrath, and is said to have cried out: "God hath removed wives from us, but the Devil procureth us sisters!"... Not long after this came the death of Brother Ambrose of the Cistercian Order, to whom my lord Ugolino had committed the care of the aforesaid convents, except that of St Clare. Then Brother Philip the Long procured the care of the aforesaid convents, with authority from the Pope to depute Brethren Minor to minister to these ladies according to his [Brother Philip's] choice<sup>3</sup>. St Francis, hearing of this, was greatly angered, and cursed Brother Philip as the destroyer of the Order. And the aforesaid Brother Stephen was wont to say that he heard the following words from the mouth of St Francis: "Hitherto the canker hath been only in the flesh, and there was some hope of cure; now it hath eaten into the very bones, and will prove incurable."

This account rests on as good historical evidence as many other events in Francis's life which are almost universally accepted; nor is it at all inconsistent with our other evidence<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, this change of attitude is implied in first-rate authorities like Celano and the *Mirror*; it is in harmony with thirteenth-century

<sup>1</sup> Olier, pp. 418-19.

<sup>2</sup> A term of compassionate condescension in the Middle Ages: it survives in France and Switzerland as *crétin*.

<sup>3</sup> This was in 1219-20, when St Francis was away in Syria.

<sup>4</sup> Mr Gilliat-Smith's attempt to get rid of this evidence is characteristic of the lack of historical sense which pervades his whole book. He would have us believe that the story is merely an adaptation of the earlier legend of St Benedict and Scholastica, with which in fact it has scarcely two details in common. And, wholly concerned as he is to reconcile Francis and Clare with the modern orthodox point of view in his Church, he conceals from the reader that he has borrowed this far-fetched identification of the two stories from p. 121 of the agnostic Tamassia, whose *St Francis and his Legend* (tr. L. Ragg, 1910) was written to prove that Celano and all the earlier authorities are works of imagination destitute of historical value.

ideas, and it is corroborated by St Bonaventura and by legal documents.

For there is no question that the Franciscans soon found their relations with the nuns extremely difficult, just as the Dominicans did at the same time, and the Cistercians and Premonstratensians a few generations earlier. This, like the question of poverty, can be most clearly traced in the changes of papal policy<sup>1</sup>. Ugolino's Rule was silent on the point; but, as pope, he definitely committed the nuns to the care of the friars (1227). In 1230, his bull *Quo Elongati* interpreted chapter xi of the 1223 Rule so as to forbid all access to the Clarisses on the part of any friar except those specially deputed by the general to minister to them. This prescription was the cause of two very important incidents. Brother Elias had always been very friendly with St Clare and the Order. In 1239, shortly after his deposition, he visited a monastery of Clarisses in a friendly way. This was distinctly an infraction of the Rule as explained in *Quo Elongati*; the minister-general rebuked Elias, the pope backed up the general; then Elias apostatized from the Order and went over to the camp of Frederick II, who was at war with the pope. Again, to St Clare this restriction of friendly intercourse and spiritual ministrations was equally abhorrent, as Celano tells us in his life of her. She refused to allow the friars to beg any longer on behalf of the Clarisses or to administer their finances, saying: "If we may not have the friars for our spiritual bread, we don't want them for our bodily bread." Celano says that Gregory therefore mitigated his prohibition, but no bull to that effect has survived. In 1245, Innocent IV, at the request of the friars, partly relieved them from their obligations to the nuns; a few months later, he revoked this new decree; and his Rule of 1247 prescribes a close connexion between the two Orders. Under Bonaventura's generalship, the friars complained of the burden again; in 1262 Urban IV tried another compromise, which failed, and his Rule of 1263, composed under Bonaventura's inspiration, limited the obligation by two important conditions. First, the nuns must expressly ask for the

<sup>1</sup> This is well brought out by Oliger, *l.c.* and by Lazzeri in A.F.H. vol. iv, *Documenta Controversiam inter Fratres Minores et Clarissas spectantia*: other documents in Wadding under various years.

friars' care in each case; and, secondly, it is to be understood that such care is vouchsafed not of legal right, but out of pure charity. Here we have St Bonaventura's own testimony, in about 1269. In question 17 of his *Libellus Apologeticus*, after meeting the objection that the friars neglect their Tertiaries, he is next plied with the question:

"Why then do ye take the Order of St Clare in your care, since that must be an equal hindrance to your liberty?" "This Order of St Clare [he replies], is not joined to us by a servile bond, which would compel us to minister to the nuns; but, on the petition of our Cardinal-Protector, our Ministers appoint for these ladies confessors, who may sometimes minister the sacraments to them, and visitors to correct them. The rest of the Brethren are no more bound to serve them than to serve other friends of our Order, at their own choice.... Therefore, whensoever our Order should feel it generally inexpedient to retain the care of the nuns, we might throw it off.... And, although we cannot altogether hinder the foundation of new convents of nuns, yet it is only our steady opposition which prevents their rapid multiplication through the grant of the Pope or Cardinal Protector; and this shows that we have no desire to be greatly occupied with the Second Order."

The friction thus revealed, however natural, explains why Boniface VIII, in 1296, reverted to the strict rule that among the Franciscans, as in other Orders, the nuns should be legally dependent upon the male Religious.

It is necessary to touch thus briefly upon this question, since the modern fashion of ignoring it distorts the whole perspective of the Franciscan movement. We are not concerned with what we should have liked things to have been, but with what they actually were. The Cardinal Protector, shortly before the publication of Urban's Rule, complained that the Second Order of St Francis was known by five different titles, and followed four different ways of life. Therefore Urban decreed that they should use one uniform title—"the Order of St Clare"—and one uniform Rule—his own of 1263. Yet in fact, as we have seen, three different Rules persisted, to which St Colette's was added in the fifteenth century; nor, again, was the attempt to secure uniformity of nomenclature more successful. The *Minories*, in London, is called after the nuns whom English folk called not *Clarisses*, as the pope commanded, but *Minoresses*; and the Rule

which that convent followed was not Urban's professedly final Rule, but the professedly superseded Rule of Longchamps. And, despite the strict law of claustration, the popes were obliged to fulminate in 1250 and in 1257 against women wandering abroad under the name of Clarisses, who brought discredit upon their Order. So that with the nuns, even more than with the friars, we see the difficulty of reconciling both sides of the Franciscan ideal. Where the nuns kept Franciscan freedom, this degenerated into licence; where, on the other hand, they remained humble and obedient subjects to the constituted authorities, the practical result was the formation of a number of fresh convents differing in no essential respects from the convents of the older Orders. For we can scarcely call their mendicancy an essential particular. It is true that Boniface VIII, in his bull *Periculoso*, draws a distinction between nuns of mendicant Orders; but only to this extent, that, while the non-mendicants are forbidden to admit more nuns than the actual revenues of the house will support, the mendicants are here allowed more latitude. There is no more question here than at any earlier time, since 1219 at least, of the nuns going out and begging for themselves. The begging was done for them by friars or proxies of different sorts; and, in a good many cases, there was no more need for begging in the case of the minoresses than of any other nuns. Denney Abbey, in Cambridgeshire, was founded in 1294 for a small settlement of "minoresses," in the teeth of the priory of Barnwell, which foreboded considerable loss of "the small tithes, as milk, oblations, confessions and other things belonging as of common right to the said church" of Waterbeach, appropriated to Barnwell<sup>1</sup>. A compromise was arrived at, but litigation went on until 1302 at least. In 1352 the noble foundress of Pembroke College removed the nuns to Denney, endowing them then and later with a whole manor and other considerable possessions in nine different parishes, one as far off as Buckinghamshire. At the Dissolution, when Henry VIII conferred the nuns' possessions upon Edward Elrington, these included the manors of Denney, Waterbeach, Histon, High-Hall and Strode, with everything be-

<sup>1</sup> W. K. Clay, *Hist. of Waterbeach*, Camb. Antiq. Soc. 1859, pp. 94, 104, 121.



longing to them in the counties of Cambridge, Bedford, Essex, Norfolk and Kent; the rectories, too, of Histon St Andrew, Eltisley, Biddenham, Ridgwell and Gooderstone, with the advowsons and patronage of the vicarages of the same parishes in the counties of Cambridge, Bedford, Essex and Norfolk;

and other properties

in the vills, fields, hamlets and parishes of Denney, Waterbeach, Histon, High-Hall, Strode, Cambridge, Chesterton, Fordwere, Milton, Landbeach, Fen-Ditton, Madingley, Gorton, Coton, Paxton Magna, Rampton, West-Wratting, Knapwell, Cottenham, Horningsey and Hockington.

Foreign minoresses were sometimes even more lordly. Fr. Oliger has noted the considerable possessions of Italian nunneries at a very early date, and the chartulary of Clarenberg, in North Germany, is very significant<sup>1</sup>. Gifts of lands and rents begin in 1287, but are not held openly in the nuns' name. In 1289 Nicholas IV grants them a privilege: "Seeing that, although very many nunneries of your Order are obtaining various possessions, yet that same Order is founded in poverty, and you, poor of your own free-will, are serving the poor Christ, therefore, moved by your supplications," he forbids any claim upon the nuns for rates and taxes, as they would be called nowadays. Then, from 1305 onwards, come charters that imply or state their fresh endowments. As early as 1359 they are amassing not only lands but bondfolk; later, they take money from a serf who buys his freedom, they take recognizance from a serf that, if he dies childless, they may take all his possessions (pp. 98, 182, 190, 194, 202, 214, 219, 220, 242, 259). They take tithes (p. 234); nuns possess private property (pp. 279, 282); the convent makes investments, and has lawsuits about them (pp. 295, 328, 330). They take a dowry from a new nun (p. 317); their altar-plate included a pyx "of pure gold," with six chalices and two other pieces "silver-gilt" (p. 323); benefactors leave money for anniversaries, at which "the convent is to have a delicate pittance of good fish and wheaten bread and good wine" (p. 324). We must note these things in no grudging spirit to the good sisters, who may well have earned their fish and wine better than we earn our own incomes; but it is necessary to record

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 12.

them in order to mark the true limits within which we may call the Clarisses a mendicant Order. In their earliest origins they depended greatly upon begging, and again a small minority in the fifteenth century under St Colette, and some again under the Counter-Reformation. But the large majority of the medieval Clarisses had regular endowments; and, in the case of this Clarenberg chartulary, if the first few pages were missing, and a few names blotted out of the rest, a student might read it very carefully without guessing that he was not dealing with a Benedictine house. The Clarisses long remained among the strictest of medieval nuns; but it is difficult to say that they kept much of the true Franciscan originality. This, perhaps, may account for the fact that they had only three convents in England, though the country swarmed with Franciscan friars. The people welcomed the early friars as men who plainly had the root of the matter in them, and who differed in many most important particulars from any other body of clergy; but there was no special enthusiasm for these nuns, who differed so little from the others and who were scarcely, if at all, less costly to endow<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For Miss Bourdillon's *Order of Minoresses in England*, published while these proofs were under revision, see Appendix 40. It agrees with my text, I think, on all essential points: the author emphasizes the paradox "that the Order, within fifty years of its foundation, should have lost all sight of real Franciscan poverty" (p. 7).

## CHAPTER XII

### THE GLORY AND THE GLOOM

AMONG all the reforming Orders, there is none of whom Jacques de Vitry writes with the enthusiasm which he expends upon the Dominicans and Franciscans, and especially upon the latter, to whom he devotes one of the longest of his chapters (no. 32). After emphasizing the novelty of their undertaking, he proceeds with a very just qualification (p. 349):

But, if we look narrowly at the state and order of the primitive Church, we shall see that this Order hath not so much added a new Rule, as restored the ancient Rule, lifting it up from its fall, and resuscitating Religion, (which was nearly dead in this our eventide of a dying world, wherein the times of the Son of Perdition are nigh at hand), in order that it might prepare new champions against those perilous days of Antichrist, and fortify the props of the Church. This is that Religion of the truly poor sons of Christ crucified; this is that Order of preachers whom we call Brethren Minor; a true name, for in their nakedness and contempt of the world they are more lowly than any other cloisterers of our time. . . . These men are sent by two and two to preach as it were before the face of the Lord, and in preparation for His second coming. They are poor after Christ's own heart, carrying neither purse nor scrip on their way, nor bread, nor money or coin in their purses; they possess no gold or silver, nor shoes to their feet; no man in this Order may possess aught of his own. They have no monasteries or churches; no fields or vines or cattle; no houses or possessions, nor any place wherein to lay their heads. [They have converted even nobles and great men to their company; they have grown so rapidly in these few years that there is no province of Christendom which has not its Brethren Minor], especially since they close their society to no man who would enter into Religion, unless he be bound to some other Rule or hindered by the bonds of matrimony<sup>1</sup>. . . . For to their converts they give only a frock and a cord, leaving all the rest to God's providence. [But God repays them a hundredfold; for] all folk think themselves fortunate if these servants of God refuse not

<sup>1</sup> It will be noted that this promiscuous reception even of poor folk was one of the distinctive innovations of the friars. I have already had occasion to point out that the legend of the Benedictine cloister as an ordinary refuge for the poor is quite modern.



BROTHER WILLIAM THE ENGLISHMAN



to accept their hospitality or their alms. Not only Christians, but even Saracens and men who live in darkness admire their humility and perfection, and, when they come fearlessly to preach to them, gratefully provide them with necessaries and receive them willingly. [Vitry himself saw St Francis in the Holy Land, when he came to attempt the conversion of the Sultan, who] at length, fearing lest any of his army should be converted by the efficacy of his word and go over to the Christian army, commanded that he should be brought back to our camp with all reverence and security, saying to him at the end: "Pray for me, that God may deign to reveal to me that law and faith which pleaseth Him best." So the Saracens willingly listen to all the aforesaid Friars Minor preaching of Christ's faith and the gospel, until, in their sermons, they openly speak against Mahomet as a liar and traitor. Then they impiously scourge them, and, almost slaying them but for God's marvellous protection, they cast them forth from their cities. This is that holy Order of friars minor, that admirable and exemplary Religion of apostolic men, whom we believe the Lord to have raised up in these last days before the face of Antichrist, that son of perdition, and his profane disciples.

The good cardinal wrote with the enthusiasm natural to one who watched the first Franciscan beginnings, and who had been brought into personal contact with the saint himself. Let us now regard the two Orders through the eyes of one who was born a generation later, and who surveyed the religion, the politics, the social order of his time with an artistic vision and a philosophic reflection which were not commonly united in the Middle Ages. Matthew Paris is, on the whole, the greatest historian between the fall of Rome and the Renaissance; he takes us down a whole generation after the death of Francis and Dominic, and he was keenly interested in the friars. Here, as always, we must make allowance for his Benedictine prejudices, which might differentiate his mind from a friar's about as far as the average Evangelical and the Catholic are differentiated in the modern Anglican communion. We must make farther room for the fact that the Middle Ages were less accustomed than we are to allow for differences of opinion, even within the orthodox fold, or to keep silence under a lively sense of such differences. Thus cautioned, we may pay close attention to Matthew's brilliant and convincing contrast between the friars of 1210 and the friars of 1250; for he was not only a very able but, on the whole, a very honest man.

The description of their origins he adopts from his predecessors.

About these days [1206] those preachers who are called Minors, under favour of pope Innocent, suddenly burst forth and filled the earth. Living by tens or sevens in cities and towns, possessing nothing whatever, living by the gospel, showing extreme poverty in food and raiment, going barefoot, they showed an extreme example of humility to all men. On Sundays and holy-days they went forth from their hovels and preached the gospel in parish churches, eating and drinking at the table of those to whom they did this office of preaching. These men were found by so much the more clear-sighted in contemplation of heavenly things, as they show themselves strange to the matters of this world and to carnal delights. They keep no kind of food for the morrow, in order that this spiritual poverty which lives in their mind may be known to all men in their deeds and in their bearing<sup>1</sup>.

To the Dominicans he bears like testimony.

By his [Innocent III's] favour there arose in Italy a new sort of preachers who chose to be called Jacobites, because they began to imitate the apostolic life<sup>2</sup>. Very sparing in food and raiment, possessing neither gold nor silver nor anything of their own, they went through cities and villages and towns, preaching the gospel. In a little while they were multiplied throughout the whole world by reason of their willing poverty, living together by tens or by sevens in great cities, thinking not of the morrow, nor keeping anything for the next morning. Moreover, they lived by the gospel according to the apostolic rule; and, whatsoever was left over from their table of the alms that had been given them, this they gave forthwith to the poor. They went shod with the preparation of the gospel; they slept in their clothes, lying on mats and laying stones for pillows under their heads<sup>3</sup>.

In a quarter of a century, the scene has changed; henceforth it is Matthew's own word, not borrowed from any predecessor. In 1234 Franciscans and Dominicans were the main papal agents for crusade-preaching, and these men who had vowed voluntary poverty travelled about nobly, not to say arrogantly. In 1235, members of both Orders, "forgetting their Order and their

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Maj.* II, 511.

<sup>2</sup> In allusion, of course, to James i, 27, which is similarly interpreted in the *Ancien Rivale*. But Matthew is here mistaken; they took their name from their first settlement in the church of St-Jacques at Paris.

<sup>3</sup> *Chron. Maj.* II, 443.

profession," were found intruding themselves illegally into other folk's jurisdictions. By 1239, "they had become counsellors and special messengers of kings; so that, even as in former days, they that wear soft clothing were in kings' houses, so now these wearers of humble garments were in the houses and chambers and palaces of princes." In 1241, Matthew notes that these ubiquitous and independent travellers are naturally utilized as political agents by the pope; from year to year he becomes more indignant with this cheapening of their spiritual office; they are "sophistical legates of the pope," "papal tax-gatherers and beadles," "fishers not of men but of money"<sup>1</sup>.

Then comes a natural but fatal consummation; in 1243 the two new Orders fall out with each other,

which moved many men to wonder, seeing that both seemed to have chosen the way of perfection, to wit, of poverty and patience. The Preachers asserted that they had been the earlier, and therefore the more dignified; that their habit was more honourable; that they deservedly took their name and work from preaching, and bore the truer mark of apostolic worth. The Minors answered that they had chosen for God's sake a stricter and humbler life, and therefore worthier by reason of its greater holiness; moreover, that friars could and might migrate from the Order of Preachers to their Order, as from a lower to a stricter and higher. The Preachers contradicted them to their face, asserting that, although these Minors go barefoot and in vile frocks and with a rope for girdle, yet the eating of flesh or a richer diet is not denied to them even in public, whereas this is forbidden to the Preachers; wherefore the Preachers may not fly to the Minors as to a stricter and worthier Order, but conversely. Thus therefore between these, as between Templars and Hospitallers in the Holy Land, the enemy of mankind has sown tares and an enormous scandal of discord has arisen; and, because these are scholars and men of learning, it is a most perilous thing for the whole Church, and a token of the Great Judgement which stands at the door. And—terrible and mournful portent—during the last three or four centuries or more the monastic Order has not fallen so rapidly downwards as their Order [of friars]; for it is now scarce 24 years since these brethren built their first houses in England, and now their buildings rise to regal height. These are they who, in sumptuous edifices which grow from day to day, and within their lofty walls, spend untold treasures, impudently transgressing the

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Maj.* III, 287, 333, 627; IV, 173 (cf. IV, 346, 514, and V, 529), 278, 551, 601, 612; V, 67, 195, 401.



bounds of poverty and the foundation of their profession, as the German St Hildegard prophesied. They diligently haunt the deathbeds of nobles and rich folk whom they know to abound in money, not without injustice and damage to the ordinaries, in order to gape after gain, to extort confessions and secret testaments, commending only themselves and their own Order and putting them before all others; wherefore none of the faithful believes nowadays that he will be saved unless he be guided by the counsels of Preachers and Minors. They are solicitous for acquiring privileges, counsellors and chamberlains and treasurers at the courts of kings and nobles, friends of the bridegroom and brokers of marriages, tools of papal extortions, in their sermons either flatterers or most bitter accusers, or blabbers of confessions, or rash rebukers.

And, in 1250, when Matthew Paris, feeling his own end approaching, solemnly ended his chronicle for the time being with six pages summarizing the main events of the last half-century, which "many historians" judged to be unique in its multiplicity of wonderful events, then he gave a prominent place again to this story of the two Orders, emphasizing with equal force the charm of their beginnings and the tragedy of their decay<sup>1</sup>. Both sides, the glory and the gloom, were among the marvels of a marvellous and marvel-loving age.

For the thirteenth century really was a marvellous age, both in its strength and in its weakness. It has been truly said that this century anticipated, in many ways, things which were not realized, until the Renaissance and the Reformation<sup>2</sup>. And, like these two Orders, it was more startling in nothing than in its contrasts. On the one hand, there is truth in Professor de Wulf's verdict that "the thirteenth century believed that it had reached a state of stable equilibrium...their extraordinary optimism led them to believe that they had arrived at a state close to perfection"<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand, there is a practically unanimous consensus of despair for this world<sup>4</sup>. Jacques de Vitry does, indeed, speak of the great improvement of the world in his own day: but he wrote before the evident symptoms of Franciscan decay. Moreover, we have seen how definite was

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Maj.* v, 194, 511.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *Historical Essays*, pp. 93 ff.; Frederic Harrison in *Fortnightly Review*, Sept. 1891, pp. 325 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages*, 1922, p. 268.

<sup>4</sup> For full evidence see *From St Francis to Dante*, ch. v.

his expectation that this was the last struggle of a dying world, and that Antichrist was already at the gate. We have seen how the more reflective Matthew Paris shares this conviction, as indeed it was rooted in the whole thought of his age, and is proclaimed by none more emphatically than by great friars of the second and third generation, such as Adam Marsh and Roger Bacon. The latter, who in many ways saw incomparably farther than any of these others, is certain that some unique crisis must be at hand; either a miracle of salvation, in the shape of a most virtuous pope in alliance with an equally virtuous emperor, who shall together "arise to purge the Church with the double sword of the spirit and the flesh"; or, on the contrary, the catastrophic consummation of the coming of Antichrist. For not only the older Orders, but more especially the friars themselves, founded sixty years earlier, "are already horribly decayed from their first dignity."

Here we have, I think, at least a partial explanation of that change which seemed so inexplicably sudden both to Matthew Paris and to Roger Bacon. Not only enthusiasm, but knowledge and patience are indispensable to the enduring success of any movement. There was too little knowledge in a world where men "believed that they had arrived at a state close to perfection." Their patience, again, was often "too near neighbour to despair"; yet a little while, and we shall be in eternal heaven or hell, or God will have shrivelled up the whole world like a parched scroll. Under those conditions, extraordinary optimism naturally alternates with equally violent pessimism; the century had still one lesson to learn, sad and humiliating, discouraging if we look at nothing else, but yet a necessary part of the truth, and therefore a factor indispensable to final success:

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short  
To the less practised eye of sanguine youth;  
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,  
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,  
Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare!  
Unbreachable the fort  
Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall;  
And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,  
And near and real the charm of thy repose,  
And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FRIARS' DECAY

EVEN while men still lived who might have known St Francis personally, there was a strong reaction. Men doubted, not merely through impiety and self-interest, but with some solid reasons to plead. A Franciscan of about 1290 counts this as one of the main tunes which the Devil plays on his pipe to fool mankind. Sinners, in self-defence,

say that sins are not such grievous things as these friars preach; for, if it were so, they themselves would not come to heaven. In old days, there were three or four mortal sins—treason to one's lord, suicide, defiling our neighbour's wife, manslaughter—but nowadays so many are preached as no man can number; they do naught but torment me. Who can love his enemy, or buy without lying? We can never live like monks, without dancing or worldly joy, as our forefathers did, in whose days there was peace and truth. But, since men have heaped one mortal sin upon another, with so many preachings and so many indulgences, the world has gone to the bad<sup>1</sup>.

Side by side with this, our Franciscan notes other fatal devil-tunes: "almost all, even Religious, are deceived" by the hope of amending some day before their death, other folk trust absolutely in God's mercy; others "(and this is worst of all) say: 'Whatever he does here, if he be doomed to damnation, damned he will be.' These think themselves wise; yet they are fools. If this be indeed so, why dost thou lock thine house and thy chest?"<sup>2</sup> This kind of evidence is very valuable; it shows how even this revival had been unable entirely to avoid the two besetting dangers of the revivalist. Some men's consciences had

<sup>1</sup> Franz, p. 84. We get the same evidence from the Dominican side, in the *Vitae Fratrum*, p. 138: "A certain secular man said to Master [Jordan of Saxony, minister-general, who died in 1236]: 'Master, how is this which we secular folk sometimes say among ourselves, that, ever since your friars and the Franciscans came, there has never been a good time on earth as there was before?'" Bromyard quotes a similar saying as common in his own day, *Sum. Pred. R. v.*, § 7.

<sup>2</sup> His older contemporaries, Caesarius of Heisterbach and Berthold of Regensburg, both allude to the prevalence of this crude fatalism.

become hardened by continual and not always tactful scouring; others contrasted the preacher's life with his words.

For, to begin with, the later history of the Franciscans is one of continual juggling with the original rule of poverty. Manual labour died very early: we can see that from the *Mirror of Novices*, written by St Bonaventura's secretary, Bernard of Besse, and often ascribed in the Middle Ages to Bonaventura himself<sup>1</sup>. When we have made all allowance for its special purpose, the book still startles us by its puritanical and un-Franciscan spirit. The author constantly quotes authorities from the older Orders—Benedict, Bernard, and Hugh of St Victor—but he scarcely ever quotes from Francis himself. The length and preciseness of his rules for formal behaviour contrast crudely with his attitude towards work. Nothing would lead the reader to suspect that manual labour had originally been the economic foundation of the Order. On p. 294 it is casually mentioned, in a quotation from St Bernard addressed to his fellow-Cistercians; on p. 311, an equally casual notice comes in a quotation from Hugh of St Victor. The "work" mentioned on p. 296 is writing, or light house-work; there is no hint of anything like Brother Giles's cleaving of wood, or of the harvest-work in which the earliest friars had helped. Again, even in chapter 22, which professes to treat specially of "manual work," there is very little to be found. On p. 356 it is kitchen-work, brushing of one's own clothes and washing one's own head; even the "greater household duties" of pp. 358-9 are very small. Moreover, by way of filling this chapter of "manual labour," mass-singing is instanced on p. 357, and punctuality at meals is even reckoned under the same heading of "work" (pp. 357-8). On p. 368 work is again vaguely mentioned, but not specified; on p. 415 the recommendation that the novice should help others "*etiam corporaliter, si fieri potest*"<sup>2</sup>, speaks volumes for the exceptional nature of real physical labour. Even if we had no evidence from other sources, this book alone would show how the primitive ideal had been abandoned on this point.

For the abandonment of the original attitude towards money

<sup>1</sup> An excellent little edition is printed at the end of *Selecta pro instruendis fratribus scripta S. Bonaventurae*, Quaracchi, 1898. My references are to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> "Even with bodily help, if may be."

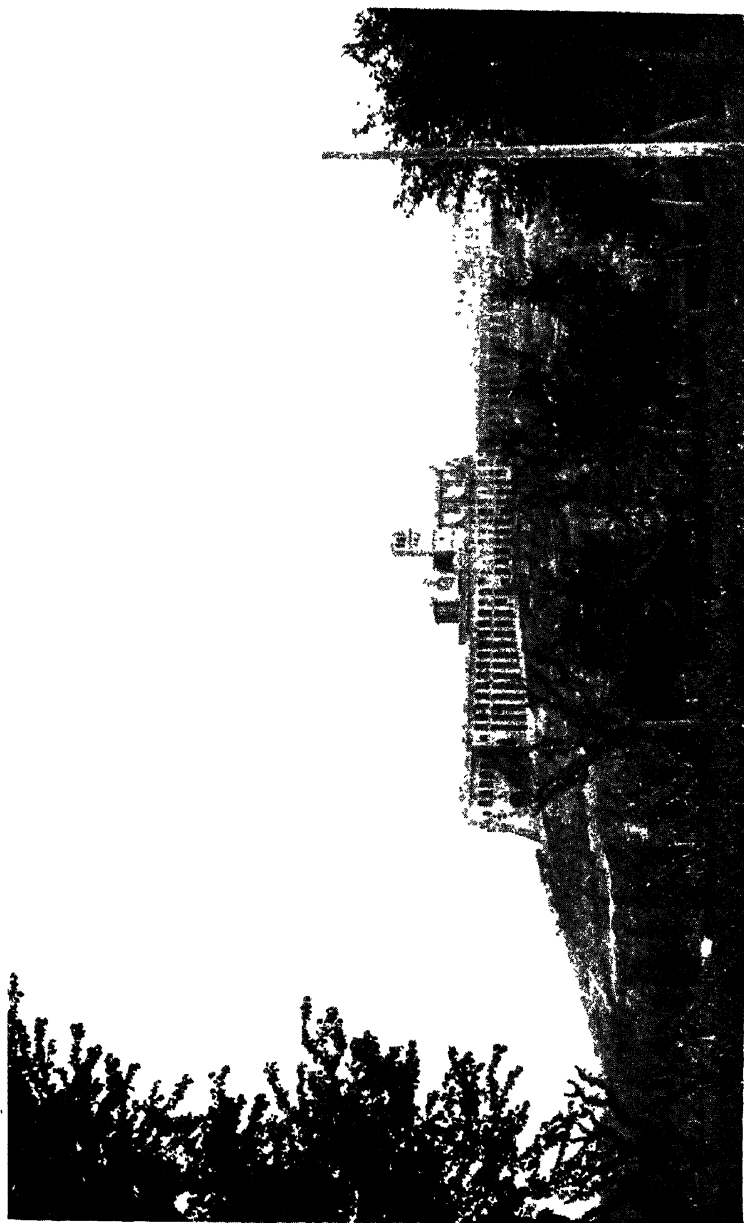
we have even plainer evidence<sup>1</sup>. The Rule expressly forbade the friars to receive money, either directly or through a third person. Francis was scarcely cold in his grave when a vast collecting-system was instituted for raising money to build the great church to which his body was transferred. St Bonaventura, in his circular letters to the Order in the years 1257 and 1266, speaks with picturesque exaggeration of the abuse of begging: it has come to this, he says, that the wayfarer fears to meet a friar as he fears a robber<sup>2</sup>. The clearest evidence, however, comes from the General and Provincial Chapter Acts of the Order. Many of these have disappeared; but many have been printed in different volumes of the *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*; others by Father Ehrle in vol. vi of *Archiv f. Litt. und Kirchengeschichte*, and by Prof. A. G. Little in the *English Historical Review* for 1903.

In 1269, we find the authorities interfering to prevent the friars from encroaching on the parish clergy in the two lucrative fields of burials and testamentary dispositions; in 1290 we find debts on the one hand, and money-balances after the conventual audit on the other. In 1292 individual friars are receiving life-pensions, and friaries are endowed with regular rents from house-property, etc. Even more significant, they are bidden not to grant receipts for money in the ordinary commercial form, but to use a special form so phrased as to save the face of the Order<sup>3</sup>. The contemporary statutes for the province of Aquitaine prohibit getting the monastery into debt beyond a certain amount, selling or pawning valuables, collectively or individually, and "collections of money for the brethren after their sermons in church; nor let money-collections be ever made in the friars' own churches." This last prohibition had already appeared in Bonaventura's great codification of 1260, from which we also learn that some friars tried to salve their consciences by collecting the money in basins, or with gloved hands, a subterfuge to which Wyclif and others allude with merited scorn.

<sup>1</sup> For English examples, see A. G. Little, *Studies*, chs. i and ii.

<sup>2</sup> These letters are printed by Wadding under those two years, and in all editions of St Bonaventura.

<sup>3</sup> A.L.K.G. vol. vi, p. 93; cf. A.F.H. vol. vii, pp. 8, 24, 25: it was a command which needed frequent repetition.



THE BASILICA AND CONVENT OF ASSISI



These statutes show no less clearly how completely the original poverty of the friars' church buildings and furniture was abandoned; and it is not surprising that a small handful of the early companions resisted these things with an obstinacy which threatened a serious cleavage in the Order. This minority called themselves the *Spirituals*; others sometimes called them the *Zealots*. They were mainly of the old sort, dwellers in hermitages or in tiny mountain-convents; in opposition to whom, the majority were called Conventuals. The quarrel gradually focused itself upon the question of the poverty of Christ. If, as the Spirituals contended, Christ and His apostles had possessed nothing, either individually or collectively, then the original Franciscan ideal was the Christ-life, so far as that life could be codified or organized. To the Conventuals, who had silently abandoned this ideal of complete abdication, and to the rest of the clergy, who had never pretended to it, the denial of Christ's poverty in this extreme sense was as essential as its assertion was to the Spirituals. The quarrel pursued the usual tortuous course of medieval ecclesiastical policy<sup>1</sup>. Those who fought for the majority quoted, among other texts, those words of the Master to St Peter, "put up *thy* sword," as proof that at least one apostle had been allowed to possess at least one piece of private property; *ergo*. . . . St Bonaventura, on the other hand, maintained the poverty of Christ, and the thesis soon received strong papal support. It was asserted by Nicholas III in 1279; his bull *Exiit qui seminat* was drawn up with special care, published with unusual solemnity, and incorporated in canon law. But the popes finally found that they had to choose between persecuting a small fraction of enthusiasts and alienating the large majority of what was, at this time, probably the most powerful of all ecclesiastical organizations. John XXII was a legist, a financier, and a disciplinarian; and he finally ventured to contradict the solemn pronouncement of Nicholas III. It was unfortunate for the innovator that Nicholas had, in his bull *Exiit*, pronounced a special anathema upon any man who should gloss away or dispute the decisions of that

<sup>1</sup> The whole story is told in the third volume of H. C. Lea, *Hist. Inq. in Middle Ages*; also extremely well, though with a little less sympathy for the Spirituals, in the opening chapters of A. G. Ferrers Howell's *St Bernardino of Siena*.



bull; therefore John had to begin with a preliminary bull (*Quia nonnunquam*) suspending this anathema and opening the field for fresh discussion. Finally, in 1323, his bull *Cum inter nonnullos* finally decided the question of the poverty of Christ in an opposite sense to that of *Exiit*. From this time onwards it has been definitely heretical to maintain the complete possessionlessness of Christ and His apostles; and so it will always remain unless some future pope circumvents John XXII and decides again as Nicholas III decided. The Franciscans who adhered to the doctrine of Bonaventura, of Nicholas III, and very likely of Francis himself, were driven into open revolt: they called themselves *Little Brethren*, *Fraticelli*, a name which had already been fixed upon the extreme and recalcitrant wing of the Spirituals. Encouraged by Joachim's prophecies, they organized a church of their own; John XXII was Antichrist, and the world's hope lay in catastrophic revolution. The Fraticelli were partly preached down, partly burned at the stake, in the fifteenth century by orthodox Franciscans like St Bernardino, St John Capistrano, and the Blessed James of the Mark. Francis, like his Master, leaves us face to face with a great paradox. It is true that he had given peace not as the world giveth; yet he had brought also not peace but a sword.

It was a fatal policy not to allow the Spirituals to form a separate Order of their own; not only because it drove so many into actual revolt, but still more because the attempt forcibly to mix this oil and water made the whole Franciscan profession unreal. The friars, beginning from a seed very unlike to Loyola's, very soon took all the characteristics which made them the Jesuits of the Middle Ages; better organized than most Orders, more ubiquitous than any other, and more proper to be used as a papal militia<sup>1</sup>. Their energy contrasted with the torpor of many of their rivals; their far better professional education rendered them the most formidable champions of the existing ecclesiastical system; and here and there, in revolt, its most

<sup>1</sup> I have already pointed out how, though each of the four Orders always retained certain distinctive individual characteristics, yet they had a mass of common qualities, good and bad, which justifies our often taking them all together as "the friars." In all four, the vow of poverty took a certain tinge of unreality; but here the Franciscans enjoyed a bad pre-eminence, as their own writers testify; for in no other was the actual practice in anything like the same contradiction to the legal theory.

formidable opponents. Savonarola, Luther, Ochino, the reformers Barnes and Bale, were friars. It was a friar, Dr Henry Standish, who alone ventured in the Canterbury Convocation of 1515 to maintain the thesis afterwards reinvented by Bishop Stubbs, that the medieval English Church was not bound by Roman canon law except so far as it had consented to receive it, and who complained, in excuse for his failure to obtain support: "What shoulde one poor frier do alone against all the bishops and the clergie of England!"

No medieval satirist, perhaps no modern protestant, has painted their decay in darker colours than their own best men. The Italian Bonaventura, the Spaniard Alvarez Pelayo, the Fleming John Brugman, when they write about their fellow-Franciscans, anticipate or confirm all that is told us by Chaucer and Langland and the Lollards. Bonaventura's two circular letters are to be found in Wadding, or in any edition of the saint's own works; I have translated the most important passages in the ninth of my *Medieval Studies*. Alvarez Pelayo's *De Planctu Ecclesiae* is a rare book; I will therefore give his evidence at greater length. He was a papal penitentiary, *i.e.* a theologian whose learning and character singled him out for the hearing of "reserved" cases in confession; few men had better opportunities than such papal penitentiaries of learning what their contemporaries were thinking and doing. Moreover, as a Franciscan dignitary, he was specially familiar with the real state of his own Order. He himself tells us at the end of his book that he finished it in 1332 after two years' labour, and that he has twice revised it since, in 1335 and 1340.

As a rule, he speaks of Religious in general—Monks, Canons Regular, Friars and Nuns—without distinction; what he has to say applies equally to all. Sometimes, however, he introduces touches which can only apply to the friars and which show that he is mainly concerned with them; moreover his own table of contents to Book II, chap. 53 states that the bitter complaints in that chapter refer to "the state of the Religious in general, and especially of the Mendicants." He there enumerates the symptoms of decay<sup>1</sup>. Monachism, he says, is typified in the

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Lyons, 1517, fol. 176 a. I omit nearly all his references to canon law and quotations from the Bible and the Fathers.

good and bad figs of Jeremiah's basket, where the good were very good, and the bad were very bad (Jer. xxiv, 1).

But, even as the Religious of past times were very sweet and good, even so are many Religious of our day most bitter and bad; and, when they fall, it is harder for them to rise than for worldly folk. Many Religious of our time are like unto the Pharisees, who held the place of Religious in the Jewish synagogue, differing from other men in dress and like [unto our Religious] in outward conversation; for these boast of wearing great tonsures, and composing their dress and keeping outward ceremonies and observances. But what is religion worth without charity and piety, which are good for all things? What is a [monastic] habit without humility, tonsure without poverty, silence of mouth without quiet of heart? What is fasting worth when it is joined with gluttony, psalmody without concord, outward and vocal prayer, with a wandering mind, barren meditation without compunction or sighs or groans? What is sacramental confession without change or correction, continual celebration of Masses with an increase of vices? visitation, ever accompanied by excuses and cloaking of sins? What is it to preach saving truth, and to gainsay it with our evil life? to join in one bodily fashion of walking and singing and eating and serving, and inwardly to nourish divisions and mutual persecutions? What is blessing worth in the choir, with curses from the heart within? detraction, murmurings, backbiting, multiplication of lies, grinning and derision, whispering and scorn? peaceful words and kisses of peace, with inward indignation of heart, and evil thoughts? Of such false Religious saith the Lord in Zephaniah i, 8: "I will visit upon all such as are clothed in strange apparel," and Jeremiah ix, 26: "I will visit upon all that have their hair polled round, that dwell in the desert," that is, in the cloister; "all are uncircumcised"; that is, they keep private property and their own will and carnal pleasure.... Some, who had promised to save their souls, have committed fornication in the mountain (Gen. xix, 31)... Wherefore we may say today with Job: "Many stars," to wit, Religious, "are not pure in His sight," to wit, in Christ's; even though they seem pure in the sight of men. And, albeit such men seem to inform many people to righteousness, yet, since their life is discordant with their teaching, as was that of the Pharisees, not many of them shall shine as stars for all eternity (Dan. xii, 3).

On a later page, Alvarez dwells at length upon the dangers to all Religious from intercourse with the other sex (*ib.* II, art. 73, fol. 240 b):

First, let us treat of occasions of fornication, especially among Religious; and note that one occasion of every uncleanness among

them is gluttony; for the Religious of our day are commonly gluttonous, that is, lovers of belly-cheer. . . . The unclean spirit of gluttony departeth when the belly hath been filled; then doth it send upon us the spirit of fornication, who, coming and finding the belly heavy with sleep, bindeth it hand and foot and worketh all his will thereon from thenceforth, fouling and defiling body and soul with fantasies and defilements. Spacious and wide is the way of the belly, which leadeth to fornication and ruin, and many there be who walk therein; strait and narrow is the way of fasting and abstinence which leadeth to the life of chastity, and few there be that enter therein<sup>1</sup>. . . . The second occasion and matter of fornication, to Religious and others, is converse with women and youths.

Here follow more than four folio pages of quotations and reflections on the frailty and the dangerous attractions of women; pages which, with literally hundreds of similar passages, may be commended to the notice of those who believe that the cult of the Virgin Mary raised the medieval woman to a pedestal of respect and admiration from which the Reformation removed her. Alvarez then proceeds:

Another occasion of lechery among Religious is the reception of youths, boys, and children into monasteries, wherein they are allowed to converse indiscriminately with each other and with the other brethren; from which reception and familiarity many crimes have ensued in the Orders, and many scandals have arisen, and much ill-fame hath grown up even in the minds of secular folk, and many apostasies have come to pass; for few, after their imprisonment, remain in the Order, seeing that they are ashamed and confounded. And such men, not commonly finding promotion in the Order, which cannot trust them, are dejected and dissatisfied with their fellows, and therefore wander abroad. For such men grieve not because they have offended against God and the Order, but because they have lost their own glory; wherefore they are rarely contrite and seldom perform due penance, as I have oftentimes experienced in the case of fallen brethren in the Order, when I would have strengthened them to penitence. . . . Many Religious, old and young, eat more flesh and drink more wine than they would have eaten and drunken in the world; wherefore they are commonly carnal. . . . Another occasion of uncleanness in Religion is the converse with nuns; for Religious have their *devotae*<sup>2</sup> in convents, with whom often-

<sup>1</sup> The quotation is from John Climacus; but Alvarez adopts the sentiment for his own.

<sup>2</sup> Salimbene brings us undesigned corroboration here; frequently, when he has been praising some great lady, he adds: "she was one of my *devotae*"—i.e. spiritual daughters, Salimbene being their spiritual director.

times they talk long, and far apart from witnesses, having rather extorted than obtained licence for this from their superiors. There are thoughtless laughers, ogling eyes, scurrilous and idle and carnal words, touches that provoke to sin, hearts seething with fire, and every window open to the commodities of death. The rest it is indecent for me to write, yet still more criminal for them to do; many have thus been cast into prison, and many have apostatized. They are sent by their superiors to preach in the nunneries; yet these men whereof I speak go thither rather to fornicate<sup>1</sup>. There they preach in common, but in private and with one private friend they bring shame on themselves and their Order. Such a preacher buildeth in common, and destroyeth in secret. They give and send gifts to each other, and kindle the flame<sup>2</sup>; whatsoever such a shameless nun hath worked by day and night, she giveth all to her seducer, saying that she hath given alms to her brother; I say rather, that she hath given food to his uncleanness<sup>3</sup>. Scarce any nun lacketh her carnal *devotus*; whereby she maketh void her first faith; see Causa xxvii, Quaest. i.<sup>4</sup> Such *devotion* I call *corruption*; oftentimes have I preached in convents against such devotions, and have thereby incurred hatred from both sides, brethren and sisters. The abbesses and lady-superiors know these things, and murmur, but they correct them not, as fearing the indignation of the friars and the nuns; nay, what is more wicked still, certain superiors of the nuns give them a special licence for such devotions, thus making themselves procuresses to sin; and some of the nuns have no shame among others; and that nun looketh upon herself as abandoned who hath no such *devotus*, or rather seducer. Secular folk know this; the nuns' relations know it; they murmur and are scandalized and make complaint unto the superiors, yet with little effect; for the carnal fire, burning until all is consumed, hath been kindled, and cannot be quenched, until that fire [of the

<sup>1</sup> The following description applies specially to the friars; corroborative matter as to the difficult relations between the friars and nuns may be found in the documents quoted by Frs. Oliger and Lazzeri, *l.c.*, and by Fr. Denifle at the beginning of his article on p. 417 of A.L.K.G. vol. II.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Chaucer:

"His typet was ay farsed full of knyves  
And pynnes, for to yeven yongē wyves";

and the Franciscan provincial statute of 1290 printed in A.F.H. vol. VII, p. 14: "That no brother, whether directly or through a third person, shall give any gift to the nuns of St Clare, nor receive nor exchange nor send any such gift, unless he have first obtained licence from the Provincial Minister." The numerous Chapter Acts are full of similar prohibitions; a good many of the earlier are summed up in c. XIX of the General Constitutions of 1331 (A.F.H. vol. II, p. 594).

<sup>3</sup> Monastic legislators constantly forbid nuns to work purses, girdles, etc. for sale or for presents.

<sup>4</sup> *I.e.* the passage from Gratian which I quote in Chapter XI, p. 154. Alvarez enlarges upon this theme, with many details, at the end of fol. 243 b.

last day] shall come to devour all who burn now in this great and unspeakable flame, as saith the Psalmist (xx, 10): "Thou shalt make them as an oven of fire in the time of thine anger." For it is specially in the mendicant Orders that many superiors, who ought to correct others, become an occasion and example of death to their subjects with their "devotions." All this that I have said against this pestilent devotion of Religious and nuns is contrary to both the spirit and the letter of Canon Law.

Here follows half a page of quotations from canon law as to the peril of such intercourse. Many more similar passages might be quoted from Alvarez's book, which was dedicated to the pope.

John Brugman wrote about a century and a half later; he died in 1473 after a long and laudable career as writer and mission-preacher. His *Speculum Imperfectionis Fratrum Minorum* is a brief pamphlet addressed to the authorities of his Order<sup>1</sup>. His opening sentence strikes the keynote: "First, let it be noted that our Order is on the verge of ruin [*minatur ruinam*], since"—and then follows a list of abuses, concerning each of which Brugman calls upon the authorities to examine their consciences. It is less plain-spoken than Alvarez; but it suggests a similar state of things. The first mendicant freedom had degenerated into licence.

When Chaucer's Summoner compared a friar to a blue-bottle

Lo, goodē men, a flye, and eek a frere  
Wol falle in every dysshē and mateere—

he was only quoting, whether directly or indirectly, from great disciplinarians of the past. We all know St Francis's parting blessing on the idle brother who had worn out even a saint's patience—"Get thee gone, brother Fly—*Vade, frater musca*." Even earlier than this, the author of the Exposition of the Rule of Augustine had written:

A man said once to a Religious of this sort "Thou art like unto God; we find thee everywhere!" Such fellows may be likened to the busy restless fly, which alighteth now on one man, now on another, and is importunate to all: so also do these bustling fellows; here they scandalize this man, there they quarrel with another; at one moment they mock a man, at another they prick him, and so forth<sup>2</sup>.

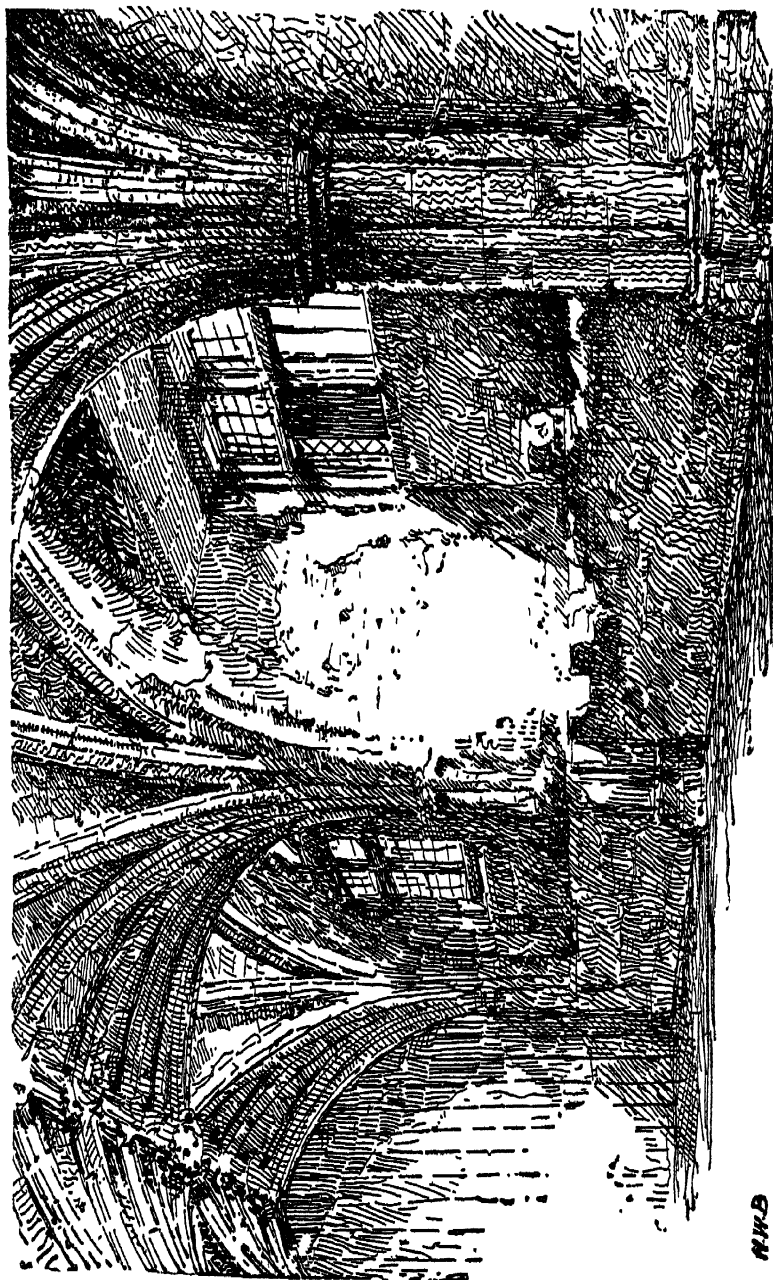
<sup>1</sup> Printed in A.F.H. vol. II.

<sup>2</sup> *Bib. Max. Patrum*, t. 25, p. 645 c.

This, which could attract painful notice even before 1200, was naturally intensified by the sudden multiplication of the four Orders of friars. Chaucer and the English satirists, many of them Lollards, are too well known to need quotation here. But the author of *Piers Plowman* was no Lollard; yet, to him, the friar is the arch-traitor within the Christian camp; he has sometimes indulgence and respect for the monk, but never for the friar, except for him of "long, long since, in the lifetime of Francis." It may be said that this poem, after all, only voices the superior man in the street of the later fourteenth century, just as Gower, equally critical of the friars, expressly assures us that he speaks not so much for himself as echoing the thoughts and words of his neighbours. But the Oxford University petition to Henry V against the unpunished immoralities of "exempt Religious" must certainly have meant to include the friars, far more numerous and ubiquitous than any other exempt body; and, elsewhere, we have the evidence of responsible churchmen. The author of the bulky and curious encyclopaedia called *Omne Bonum* seems to have been an English Cistercian, and to have written just before the Black Death; it may well be that disaster which accounts for the unfinished condition of his work. He criticizes the friars with a consistency which cannot be attributed entirely to class-rivalry, since we have other corroborative evidence on every point. They are (he says) too often flatterers of the rich, scandalizing their neighbours by their familiarity with the womenfolk of the household; sturdy beggars whose refusal of work flatly contravenes St Paul's precepts; mocking their public profession of poverty by the magnificence of their buildings and church furniture; catching at corpses for the sake of the corpse-presents; as hypocritical as the Pharisees of the old law; men whose appearance marks the approaching end of the world<sup>1</sup>.

A Bohemian monk of about 1400 complains that the world is evil, and men overtax and rob the monasteries, "Wherefore we are compelled henceforth to keep to ourselves, (lest our kindness should compel us to go a-begging,) the things which we were wont to give to the poor and to contribute for the varied needs of our guests." We who seem possessionate, he says,

<sup>1</sup> MS. Roy. 6, E. vi, ff. 49, 50, 390 b; vii, ff. 17, 145, 155, 157 b, 159, 161.



Cloister of the Franciscan Friary at Yarmouth



possess now almost as little as the Mendicants. "These friars, possessing nothing, are not in want; they assiduously cultivate the rich and the great... when they rise from the feast, and the tables are removed, they bless the lord with outstretched hands, and, having heaped vast thanks upon their host, they depart without settling the bill." A slightly earlier clerical poet of the same nation writes: "They shear other men's flocks and throw the parishes into confusion; they have dear applause for all who give, but, if a man cannot bring gifts or fill their hands, him they send off to his own parson"<sup>1</sup>. Gerson, in the early fifteenth century, says much the same; friars hear rich men's confessions, but neglect the poor<sup>2</sup>.

The University of Paris, in 1411, in its complaints drawn up for the coming General Council, spoke of the dangerous familiarities between friars and women<sup>3</sup>. The great Cardinal Nicholas of Cues shows how the friars' success had, later in the same century, created imitations which were becoming a social plague. He writes:

But if [preachers] seek not Christ, rather setting themselves and their private profit as the end of their labours, then they are easily known. Thus it befel in these days at Cologne, where certain poor Religious, seeing that others by their reformation had gained the people's favour, and had grown from penury to abundance of goods, took the habit and ceremonies of these reformed Religious, that they might be similarly endowed; but their fruits showed them false; and, because their aim in taking these sheep's clothing was found to be greed, therefore they were left in disappointment. For the people, hearing that they had adopted the reform for this reason, had recourse to that evangelical text [Matt. vii, 15], and so observed it that they gave no succour to these false prophets. The falseness of those who appear under Christ's habit can scarce be discerned by reason of their variety. For this man claims to serve in Christ's army under one garment, that man under another; one under a cowl, another under some other token of religion, a third under yet another; yet almost all seek not those things which are Christ's, but their own. For all are intent upon avarice, from the greatest even unto the least; and in all these things one single text doth expose their falseness, to wit: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

For it is difficult to exaggerate the extent to which the later

<sup>1</sup> K. Höfler, pp. 54, 59.

<sup>2</sup> *Opp.* vol. iv, col. 441 a.

<sup>3</sup> Finke, p. 139, § 23.

friar ignored that clause of his Rule which emphatically forbade his acceptance of money, either directly or through a third person. In 1344, the Franciscans of Cologne were condemned by one papal judgement to give bail for 2000 Roman crowns; by an amended judgement, they had to pay 900 gulden, and "to give sufficient securities for this payment, in gold and silver and such objects as did not belong to the church." No such judgement could have been given if the friars had not been notoriously "possessionate"<sup>1</sup>. St Bernardino, writing about 1430, enumerates the thirty-eight ways in which a friar can transgress St Francis's prohibition, and come under the guilt of the *proprietary*<sup>2</sup>. There can have been very few friaries, except that new and reformed minority of Observantines to which St Bernardino himself belonged, in which most of the brethren did not thus habitually offend. In 1454, by reason of a bitter quarrel between the secular clergy and the friars of Strassburg concerning burial-fees, the former accused the latter of preaching ten scandalous articles, of which the ninth is: "A nun who cannot keep the chastity she has vowed sins less in giving herself to a friar or monk than to another man"<sup>3</sup>. And here, as in so many other ways, it was the practice of the Roman court which frustrated those economic reforms which were almost necessarily bound up with moral reform. In 1442, we find, in the papal registers:

To Thomas Joyes, a Friar Minor. Dispensation to him (who has for several years without any interruption served in the chapel of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, who has petitioned on his behalf) to receive and hold for life any benefice with cure [only]; with licence and faculty hereby to any collator and patron to collate it to him; notwithstanding the constitutions of Otto and Ottobon, sometime papal legates in England, etc.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, even in the case of "possessionate" monks, it had long since been decided that the pope himself could not absolve a

<sup>1</sup> Braun, p. 83. See the list of their possessions at Cologne on p. 132. In later years, their cloister became a regular market-place in which foreign traders had their booths (p. 140).

<sup>2</sup> *Opp.* vol. III, pp. 442-3.

<sup>3</sup> Printed by Schiltern in notes to Jacob v. Königshofen (Strassburg, 1698), p. 1130.

<sup>4</sup> P.L. vol. IX, p. 410.

Religious from his three substantial vows, one of which was that of poverty.

Nevertheless—or shall we say, partly on that account—the friars continued to attract converts. Salimbene's autobiography shows how, in the early days, the adventure of running away from home to a friary might be as attractive as, until a few generations ago, that of running away to sea. His contemporary, Roger Bacon, wrote that

in most cases—*ut in pluribus*—boys enter the [Franciscan and Dominican] Orders at twenty or younger; and this especially from the English Sea to the limits of Christendom, and especially beyond the realm of [Northern] France, so that in Aquitaine, Provence, Spain, Italy, Germany and Hungary, Austria, and everywhere they are received into these Orders promiscuously from their tenth to their twentieth year<sup>1</sup>.

St Thomas Aquinas defends the reception of boys into the Dominican Order<sup>2</sup>. A couple of generations later, Bishop Richard de Bury (or, possibly, the Dominican Holkot), records the popular report that the Franciscans enticed novices with apples<sup>3</sup>. Almost at the same time, a possibly Cistercian author said much the same of the friars in general. After reminding his readers of the prescription in canon law that children should not be received into Religion without their parents' consent (*Decret.* pars II, causa XX, q. 2, c. 4), he proceeds: "This chapter, as it seems, makes against the friars, who receive children into Religion without their parents' consent: nay, against their parents' will"<sup>4</sup>. A little later, again (1358), Oxford University defended itself by forbidding entrance to the friars' colleges before the age of eighteen, though Parliament reversed this decision in 1366<sup>5</sup>. About this same time, Bromyard admits and justifies this admission of young novices; in many cases they would not come in at all if their entry were deferred to a later age<sup>6</sup>. His contemporary, Gower, complains that, whereas St Francis and St Dominic had not been used to entrap children;

<sup>1</sup> *Compend. Stud. Phil.* in *Opp. Ined.* R.S. p. 426.

<sup>2</sup> *Sum. Theol.* 2<sup>a</sup> 2<sup>ae</sup>, q. 189, art. v; *Contra Retrahent. a Relig.* c. 3; for other Dominican evidence, see P. M. Urceanus, *Constitutionum &c. O.P.* (Murcia, 1615), pp. 146-7.

<sup>3</sup> Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. II, p. 385.

<sup>4</sup> MS. Roy. 6, E. VII, f. 390 b, art. *Consensus*.

<sup>5</sup> Rashdall, *l.c.*

<sup>6</sup> *Sum. Pred. R.* v, § 9.

yet nowadays, if the child have a rich father, "however villain the boy be in his vices, he will become a friar of their Order; while, as for the shepherd's lad, he will never come near the Order"<sup>1</sup>. Parliament took the matter up again in 1402, and enacted "that the mendicant Friars should receive none into their Orders who had not fully completed the 14th year of his age"<sup>2</sup>. In 1414, again, the University of Oxford complained to Henry V:

Seeing that it would seem a clearly graver fault to abduct another man's boy or infant than his horse or ox; and seeing that the Mendicant Religious steal many [*plerosque*] children without their parents' consent by admitting them to their cloisters or convents, let an ordinance be made in the Ecumenical Council [of Constance] as to the age at which such young folk ought to assume the habit and tonsure of so strict an Order<sup>3</sup>.

We may illustrate this by concrete cases. Between 1350 and 1370, it was complained that a boy not yet in his thirteenth year had been "ensnared and seduced" by the Whitefriars of York into their monastery<sup>4</sup>. Again, about 1400 A.D., we find Thomas Taverner of Walsingham suing the provincial of the Order of the Carmelites, and John Thorp, prior of the Carmelites in Norwich, for detention of his son Alexander, 13 years of age, contrary to his will<sup>5</sup>. The celebrated Johann Geiler, in the early years of the sixteenth century, "suffered many persecutions and insults" because he strove against clerical concubinage and the denial of the Holy Communion to condemned persons, and

also attempted to persuade men that little boys who know not what they do, and who as yet know no difference between the Rules of Remigius and Francis, should not be thrust into friaries (especially those of loose and dissolute life), seeing that, some future day, they may perchance curse their parents to hell for this deed, and cast away their cowls and obtain papal licence to return to the world, as in these days many brethren of divers Orders have besought from Leo X, complaining that they had been forced into monasteries in their boyhood<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Mirour*, ll. 21, 569 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Trokelowe, R.S. p. 349.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. III, p. 364.

<sup>4</sup> Mode p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> *P.R.O. Lists and Indexes*, no. XII [*Early Chancery Proceedings*, vol. I], p. 12. Compare the still more interesting case which, for its length, is relegated to Appendix 13.

<sup>6</sup> Riegger, *Amoen.* fasc. I, p. 121.

By this time, indeed, the unreformed friars were counted, by orthodox reformers, among the worst enemies of the Church. It was among these that the contemporary movement in France for a general monastic reform found its greatest obstacles, as Imbart de la Tour points out<sup>1</sup>. So also in other lands. The Dominican Felician Ninguarda was Papal Visitor Extraordinary in Germany, Austria and Bohemia; he began visiting in 1572, and we have not only his separate reports in brief, but his final summary of his whole experiences, dated 1577<sup>2</sup>. He writes:

In many monasteries of the Mendicant Orders a very scandalous life is led... In visiting the aforesaid monasteries of the Mendicants and others I found women almost everywhere, even young women, for the kitchen-work. Thinking this indecent and perilous, I contrived in some monasteries to procure their dismissal and the substitution of men for kitchen-work, as I had determined to do in other monasteries also. But presently I found the greatest difficulty here, partly because in some places men could hardly be found for kitchen service, and partly that, where they were engaged, this involved higher wages than the poverty of the house could afford, and the bull of Pius V [Oct. 1566] had not yet been published.

This bull forbade the presence of women in monasteries; but such prohibitions had been repeated in every generation from time immemorial, and there is little force in the editor's excuse that many of the irregularities noted by Ninguarda were due to heretical contagion. All our indications—and these, though scattered, are very numerous—render it almost certain that a similar confidential report in 1477, or even in 1377, would have run in very much the same words. It was no mere chance that satirists of the later Middle Ages dealt with the friar, the so-called reformer, even more freely than with the monk, who could at least plead centuries of conservatism in his own Order.

In conclusion, let me repeat that these six chapters, by them-

<sup>1</sup> *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. II (1909), pp. 508 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Printed by Schellhass in *Quellen und Urkunden d. Preussischen Akademie in Rom*, vols. I-V. My quotations here are from vol. V, pp. 184 ff. Compare vol. I, p. 204: "There are some monasteries in which a single brother is put, under name of *prior*, without other companion, and he keeps a woman under the name of cook, and God knows how it is. And, under this cloak, other monasteries, wherein are more brethren, do the like.... It would be well to remove the brethren who are alone in monasteries; for these keep their wives, and care for naught."

selves, would give a very incomplete idea of Francis and the Franciscans. They are mainly designed to throw light on the extent to which this movement was capable of reforming or supplementing the older Orders; they are supplementary, therefore, to such books as those of Sabatier, Father Cuthbert and Jørgensen. No reader of any one of those three books will fail to recognize Francis's essential greatness; to some readers, this greatness may come home still more clearly from the perusal of original records like Celano, the *Mirror*, and the *Little Flowers*. Here it has been my object to set the friars in their right perspective, so far as my space would allow, within the general framework of monastic history, and to weigh success honestly against failure. Only thus, I have always held, can we understand the real greatness of any saint; for only thus do we realize how he was not born a conqueror, nor baptized or ordained to conquest, but rather a man who struggled on to victory in spite of fears within and fightings without. We cannot measure the full triumph of the spirit, so long as we regard only the great man's outward enemies, and ignore how he must have been secretly tempted to accept past and present and future failures as part of his ineluctable destiny. That side of Francis and the friars which encomiasts are most concerned to hide is necessary for the fullest and most sympathetic comprehension not only of the age, but of the man himself. We do not magnify a saint, but belittle him, by expurgating his *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*? For Francis also was crucified, though slowly, from year to year. His own followers stretched him upon the cross of his own generous miscalculations; his life is an epic of spiritual endeavour, but it shows also a tragedy of worldly failure. It shows us the relativity even of the greatest inspirations and the most unselfish movements; every man must absorb the truth in his own way; and of any particular item in any man's ideal we can never be sure that it will not finally find its worst enemies among his professed disciples.

The story of Dominican decline is closely analogous to the Franciscan. In *Piers Plowman* and in *Piers Plowman's Crede* the critics make no distinction between the two Orders. Gower adds the Whitefriars also: "Whether he be Dominican or Carmelite or Minor, there is no man who regards his honour;

they are perverse on every side"<sup>1</sup>. The downward progress may be traced also in the Dominican official records<sup>2</sup>. Formalism crept in very early; in 1220 it is prescribed by the General Chapter that every friar shall be accused in the daily chapter of faults

if he has presumed to speak with kinsfolk or messengers who come [to the priory], in order that he may hear the news from them, without presence and licence of his Superior... If by undisciplined laughter [*dissolute ridens*] giggling or playing, words or deeds, he has purposed to excite others to laughter... if, as he goes through the streets or villages, he has frequently cast wandering eyes upon vanities<sup>3</sup>.

And, as with the Franciscans, it was soon thought expedient to expurgate the too intimate records of the Founder's life. The General Chapter of 1242 decreed:

We warn and decree that the passage be erased from the *Life of St Dominic* wherein he says of himself that, albeit by God's grace he kept his virginity, yet he could not quite escape the imperfection which made him more affected by talk with young women than by converse with the old<sup>4</sup>.

In this Order also quarrels developed, (though less bitter,) between the majority and an inconveniently puritanical minority. The General Chapter of 1321 went into the matter, and decided "that nothing had been proved against those who are called *Spirituals*." There were similar, though less acute, difficulties about money. As early as 1239, the Chapter General was obliged to legislate against those who attended funerals and, "with open scandal," partook of the money doles sometimes given there to clerics (vol. III, p. 11); in 1319 it had got so far that they were accepting private and individual legacies (vol IV, p. 116); in 1321, they were buying private life-annuities (vol IV, p. 129). Again, the Chapter of 1233 legislated against the luxury of keeping personal servants; any friar travelling with a servant was to be punished; yet this prohibition has to be repeated with a monotony which brands it as ineffectual (vol. III, pp. 4, 33, 50, 77). As early as 1238 it is decreed: "We will that prisons

<sup>1</sup> *Mirour*, II. 21, 760 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For Dominicans and Carmelites, see Bromyard's admissions and Henry VI's complaints in Appendix 36.

<sup>3</sup> A.L.K.G. vol. I, pp. 206-7.

<sup>4</sup> *Mon. O. P.* vol. III, p. 24. The other references in the text are to this volume or to others of the same collection.

be built for coercion of apostates and turbulent brethren; we grant licence for the imprisonment of apostates and the correction of those who walk disorderly" (vol. III, p. 10). Whereas, in 1234, the Dominicans could still be so self-righteous in their vegetarianism, as against the older Orders, that they needed the decree: "We warn the brethren, that none preach that it is a mortal sin in monks to eat flesh," yet in 1322 the decree runs: "We ordain that the statute made in the last Chapter at Florence, against the eating of flesh... be inviolably observed" (vol. III, p. 4; vol. IV, p. 141). The mention of apostates becomes more and more frequent; in 1318, an attempt is made to prevent friars from taking refuge from their merited punishments in apostasy (vol. IV, p. 108). Like the Franciscans, this Order also began with puritanical plainness in buildings and church ornaments; but, here again, the records show progressive infractions of the Rule<sup>1</sup>. But, as in the other Order, the most significant and constantly-repeated cautions concern the other sex. Between 1220 and 1321 there are fifteen repetitions (A.L.K.G. vol. I, pp. 207-8, 222, 226; *Mon. O. P.* vol. III, pp. 17, 24, 32, 40, 47, 53, 75, 83, 98; vol. IV, pp. 80, 134). In 1261, the Minister General's circular letter to the Order bewailed the "suspicious familiarities... which scandalize the world not a little" (vol. V, p. 59; cf. pp. 128, 307). Skipping then to the last three General Chapters recorded in this series, we find the authorities still intensely preoccupied with this thorny question. In 1491, the General Chapter complains that, whereas the Rule prescribes that women should never set foot within our cloisters or choirs [*oratorium*] or other buildings, except on the consecration-day of the church, and this rule in many provinces is by no means kept, therefore we hereby decree and ordain that, from henceforth, the enclosure of the friaries be maintained, with a friar or a layman as porter, so that women be by no means permitted to enter the friaries, nor let them be admitted to entrance, unless perchance it be some noble women who might come with their meinie to visit the friary, and even that but seldom; or, unless there were a sermon in the cloister, or some meeting for some devotion, or also for visiting the sick in time of pestilence<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Jarrett, p. 119; A.L.K.G. vol. I, p. 225; *Mon. O. P.* vol. III, pp. 11, 13, 15, 23, 39, 93; all between 1220 and 1258. I have followed no farther.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. VIII, p. 396. Compare the allowances for nobility noted above in Chapter IV, pp. 57-8.



A few lines farther down, imprisonment is decreed against any who shall "introduce suspected and ill-famed women into the friary, or to the dormitory or to their cells." At the next Chapter, in 1494, it is necessary to repeat the same prohibition in practically the same words, with a similar caution added for the nunneries (vol. VIII, p. 417). In 1498, again, the same warnings, with the preamble that

very much splendour and glory accrues to our Order by the closing of friaries, and the way is stopped for very many scandals and irregularities....*Item*, since we have heard that, in many provinces of one Order, the nunneries are fallen so low—*adeo collapsa*—that they are indiscriminately opened to persons of both sexes, both men and women, and the going abroad of nuns from their nunneries is not without grievous peril and scandal to the Order,

therefore the time-honoured rules as to closing of gates and windows must henceforth be observed (vol. VIII, p. 424). Thus the unreformed Dominicans, like the unreformed friars of other Orders, were a thorn in the side of all orthodox disciplinarians during the last years of the Middle Ages. One of the "Complaints of the German Nation" to the emperor at the Diet of Nürnberg in 1522-3 was to the effect that the mendicant Orders had scraped together enough money to buy cardinalates at Rome for three of their ministers-general, and were thus able to wage a successful warfare in the law-courts against bishops, parish clergy, and laity<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> E. Brown, *Fasciculus*, vol. I, p. 374, § 94. The deep decay of the Austin friars of northern Italy in 1426, when the Reformed Order began to be formed, is shown in Father D. Calvi's *Memorie Istoriche della Congregazione Osservante*, etc. (Milan, 1669), pp. 10-11.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A GREAT ARCHBISHOP

HERE, however, special emphasis must be laid upon one side of the friar's activities which particularly impressed Matthew Paris. In two words, they became, almost from the first, a sort of papal militia.

As tax-gatherers and crusade-preachers we have seen them already. The earlier Inquisitors, if not Dominicans, were nearly always Franciscans; so were those Enquêteurs whom Louis IX, to his own honour and theirs, sent periodically round the kingdom to hear and deal with complaints against oppression by royal officers. Soon, again, they became the natural visitors of monasteries, if only because their superior piety and energy raised so many of them to episcopal sees, in spite of their own reluctance and the protests of their brethren, to whom the acceptance of a bishopric often seemed treason against the higher ideal of Religion<sup>1</sup>. Whenever, in the thirteenth century, a diocese or a province is distinguished by comparative regularity in Church discipline, the prelate is generally a friar or a special ally of the friars<sup>2</sup>. When Grosseteste, for instance, struggled to put into actual practice the theory of episcopal supervision over the whole morals of his diocese, Matthew Paris scented here the influence of Franciscan and Dominican advisers<sup>3</sup>. This was the best side of their corporate self-assertive-

<sup>1</sup> For this attitude of pious ecclesiastics in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see *From St Francis to Dante*, ch. xv.

<sup>2</sup> An interesting story in this connexion is preserved by St Antonino of Florence in his *Chronicle* (ed. 1586, vol. III, p. 670). He there tells how Gregory IX "committed the enquiry into certain monasteries to certain Dominican friars; who, finding certain abbots to be evil, deposed them without regular form of law; the people and the cardinals were angry at this, and would fain have undone the friars' work." The minister-general, Jordan of Saxony, pointed out to the pope that the shortest cut is often the most business-like, and reconciled him to the summary deposition of these abbots, "who had thoroughly merited their fate, as ye may easily learn if ye will make enquiry." As Grosseteste was the great friend of the friars in England, so in France was St Louis, who strove for monastic reform among his other high ideals.

<sup>3</sup> *Chron. Maj.* vol. IV, p. 579.

ness, when once the Orders had outgrown a small group of soul-savers and had become great and complex organizations. An early Dominican has a vision of his dead brother in Paradise who assures him: "Know this for certain, that few or none of thy Order are damned"<sup>1</sup>. There are similar assurances from an early date among the Franciscans. This conviction that they were chosen to be the salt of the earth, the leaven of an imperfect world, necessarily inspired them with a vivid sense of their duty as reformers. Matthew Paris shows natural irritation at their free criticism of the older Orders, and we have other and more detailed testimony to this. Jordan of Saxony plainly told an assembly of bishops that episcopal appointments were seldom made on really religious grounds<sup>2</sup>. The Franciscan Hugues de Digne, speaking to the pope and the cardinals in Consistory, told the latter that their true name would not be cardinals, but grabbinals [*carpinales*]<sup>3</sup>. It is well known how St Francis, in order to confound the heretics, knelt in the mud before a priest whom the whole parish held in disrepute as concubinary, and kissed in public those hands which, polluted or not in other ways, daily touched Our Lord's Body. But we need also to remember that other occasion on which, called upon to preach before an assembly of great prelates, "he took up his parable in his mother tongue, and spake much of the indiscipline of the prelates and their evil examples, and how the whole Church was put to confusion by them...and spake so much and so plainly on this matter that he was able to bring them much salutary confusion and edification"<sup>4</sup>. His disciple, Antony of Padua, who was among the greatest of the early friar-preachers, exercised very fully the prophet's right of free speech. "The bottomless pit [of Apoc. ix, 2] is greed, the smoke whereof hath now darkened almost all Religious"; all Religion is aflame with covetousness. "In former days their voice was humble, their habit vile, their belly lean, their face pale, their assiduous prayers were evident; now they threaten loudly, walk in copes and mitres, with their belly thrust forth, ruddy of face, assiduous in sleep, never in prayer!" Poor lay folk labour in the fields and

<sup>1</sup> *Vitae Fratrum*, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> *M.G.H.* vol. xxxii, pp. 226 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Étienne de Bourbon, pp. 215, 265, 304, 407.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 141.

groan; Religious living in ease and idleness are like a fat apple, eaten up with the worm of concupiscence. Almost all Religious—Benedictines and Canons Regular—steal from their Rule, “not living according to the prescriptions of their fathers, but leading their lives in crookedness and dissimulation”<sup>1</sup>. Men who felt like this, and were ready to commit themselves publicly to a crusade against wickedness wherever it might be found, were natural instruments to the hand of any courageous reforming pope. And papal reformers were realizing more and more clearly that the one cure for monastic indiscipline was regular visitation.

There were sporadic strivings after a visitation-system in very early times; Cluny extended the idea, and Cîteaux took the Cluniac system for the base of its constitution. Cistercian visitations were, from the first, so regular and business-like and successful that it was impossible for monks or non-monks to ignore the significance of this movement<sup>2</sup>. We have seen how Giraldus and Jacques de Vitry hoped for still greater reforms from the further extension of this principle; the Premonstratensians adopted it; and so, I believe, did every succeeding monastic reform of any importance<sup>3</sup>. The Benedictines began to imitate it sporadically; those of the province of Reims held a General Chapter as early as 1131, and a few other provinces occasionally followed their example. But the first real organization came from Innocent III, who decreed in the great Lateran Council of 1215 that all Benedictines and Austin canons should adopt a system of triennial provincial chapters, supported by regular visitations of each monastery in the province<sup>4</sup>. This decree was better kept, on the whole, than many others of that

<sup>1</sup> *Opera*, pp. 198, 145, 241, 304, 256; cf. pp. 27, 144, 164-5.

<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Hugh of St-Cher, a century later, gives us striking testimony here. Speaking of the Last Judgement, he says: “At the Day of Doom, when the General Chapter shall be held, he who is there deposed shall never again be set up; as it is said that he who is deposed at a Cistercian General Chapter is never afterwards promoted in that Order” (vol. iv, p. 287, col. 4).

<sup>3</sup> The fullest authority here is U. Berlière, *Les Chapitres généraux*, etc. in *Revue bénédictine* (vol. viii, pp. 200 ff.). There is an excellent summary in Heimbucher, vol. i, pp. 272 ff. For the influence of the Cistercian and Premonstratensian visitation methods see Salter, *Aug. Chapters*, pp. ix, i, 5.

<sup>4</sup> For the value of this decree for Benedictine discipline, see Schmieder, pp. 6, 10, 59.

famous council<sup>1</sup>; England kept it fairly well down to the Reformation, France and Italy with rather less regularity. It was most neglected in Germany and Spain. Innocent expressly named the Cistercians as the model to be followed by the Benedictines and Augustinians. From this time forward, we find fairly numerous, though sporadic, survivals of General Chapter Acts and similar collections of statutes, of which the earliest easily accessible are those decreed at the Benedictine General Chapter of Northampton in 1225, and printed in the preface to the first volume of Caley's Dugdale<sup>2</sup>. From this time forward, there was no legitimate excuse for the state of things which the monk Herbord of Bamberg had stigmatized in 1159: "every abbot adds or rejects from the Rule whatsoever he will, without consent or advice of his fellow-abbots, often to the grievous detriment of the brethren"<sup>3</sup>. Yet the difficulties were such as could not be remedied by papal pronouncements, however emphatic and repeated; the faults which were found in 1215 engaged the attention of successive popes down to the end of the Middle Ages and beyond. In 1232, this struggle was resumed by the capable and fearless Gregory IX, who had been St Francis's friend and protector. Gregory, as Matthew Paris tells us of this year,

ordained visitors over the Religious throughout Christendom, under the form here following... "Since it hath come oftentimes to our ears that the monasteries of the province of Canterbury<sup>4</sup> are grievously decayed [*enormiter collapsa*] both in spiritual and in worldly things, through the evil-doing and carelessness of those who dwell therein, We therefore, unwilling to dissemble longer or to overlook their faults, lest, if we leave them uncorrected, we should seem to make those faults our own, have deputed special visitors, reformers and correctors for those monasteries in that province which depend immediately upon the See of Rome, to reform them both in head and in members."

<sup>1</sup> For the comparative failure of this celebrated council, see Luchaire, *Latran*, p. 63, and Salimbene in *M.G.H.* vol. xxxii, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> The earliest of all are those of Oxford, 1219. In the *E.H.R.* for 1914, pp. 39 ff., I give a full list, for which I am mainly indebted to Dom Berlière's articles.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Berlière, *l.c.* 1901, p. 369.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Paris gives here, naturally, the name of the province to which the particular copy of the pope's bull was directed from which he is transcribing.

In his separate instructions to the visitors whom he had appointed for this particular province, he added:

We have been given to understand that some exempt monasteries in the diocese of Canterbury are deformed in spiritual and grievously diminished in temporal goods, while the monks and nuns therein, seduced by the devil's suggestion, and forgetting their covenant with the Lord their God, whereby they have denied not only themselves but also their worldly goods by the profession of their Order—nay, not fearing that sentence of death on Ananias and Sapphira—do improperly appropriate and retain to themselves, not without stigma and guilt of theft, the goods of their monasteries, and, by no venial sin, hunt after gain of money by trade and by usury, whereby also the discipline of the monastic Order is driven away, its persons are exposed to contempt, and Religion is blasphemed<sup>1</sup>.

The need was great, and even this wave of reform broke almost uselessly against the active and passive resistance of these powerful and ubiquitous corporations<sup>2</sup>. Therefore in 1236, and again in 1237, Gregory published to the world a series of statutes which dealt with the main abuses revealed by this new visitation system. These were republished, with slight alterations, by Innocent IV a few years later: they may be found in Matthew Paris (R.S. vol. VI, pp. 235 ff.). Just about the time when Innocent IV was republishing them, we get a clear insight into their working from the diary of a very remarkable prelate, who ruled one of the most civilized ecclesiastical provinces in Europe.

The modern traveller in Normandy is often nearer to the Middle Ages than he suspects. The little things which differentiate the landscape or the peasants' daily life from English Kent or Sussex are, in many cases, purely medieval<sup>3</sup>. In Normandy, there are few hedges to obstruct our view; at a single sweep we see the river-pastures melt into strips of arable, and the ploughland die off into forest over the hill-crests. There remain more ancient buildings than with us, in use or in decay. The beasts

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Maj.* R.S. vol. III, pp. 234, 238. The last sentence is ungrammatical in the text, but I have silently corrected what seem obvious scribal errors.

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew Paris, *l.c.* and my article in *E.H.R.*, 1914.

<sup>3</sup> Except in the Cotentin, and again in the Bocage (*e.g.* between Vire and Domfront), where there are deep lanes, high hedges, and wild apple-orchards as in Devonshire.

at their pasture are tethered, or watched by those who are too young or too infirm for harder field-work; here we realize the stern significance of the hayward and the village pound in old England. The Norman peasant begins work an hour or two before ours, and labours far on into the summer night; for he tills his own tiny holding. Some of the place-names, with the change of a letter or two, might just as well be English—Ouireham, Crique, Caudecote, Bec, Dieppedalle; Dieppe itself is “the Deep”<sup>1</sup>. And the men are no less closely akin to our own; Michelet wrote truly a couple of generations ago: “Les deux rives [de la Manche] se haïssent et se ressemblent”<sup>2</sup>. As we pass from village to village in this country, we may take with us the most curious of all medieval guide-books, none the less valuable because the man who wrote it had no thought of us or of any other tourist seven centuries thence. Landing at Dieppe, and following the trout-stream up towards Neufchâtel-en-Bray, we come upon the quiet village of Bures, as homely in its white and grey and green as our own Bures in Suffolk. There stands the beautiful little church, dignified and impressive far beyond its actual size; there, under the tower, we may still read the contemporary inscription recording how Archbishop Rotrou consecrated it in 1168; and there, in those days, stood that priory of two monks, who lived in what had been an ancient hunting-lodge of the Dukes of Normandy, and whom Archbishop Odo Rigaldi, from 1245 to 1269, strove steadily but unsuccessfully to wean from those fleshpots which were so emphatically forbidden by the Rule, by the pope, and by the local councils. Bures was a cell to the priory of Pré at Rouen, which itself was a cell to St Anselm’s Bec. Pré drew 600 livres a year from this outlying cell, leaving two brethren there to manage spiritual and temporal affairs on the spot. In 1249 Odo visited for the first time: “Here are two monks. They do not keep the fasts of the Rule, and they eat flesh. We warned them to abstain from flesh and to keep the fasts of the Rule”<sup>3</sup>. In 1250 he

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gaston Paris, *L’Esprit Normand en Angleterre (Poésie du moyen âge, 1895, p. 61)*.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. de France*, line III, *ad fin.*, written when the spirit of the Napoleonic wars was still strong.

<sup>3</sup> p. 48; the other references are to pp. 100, 170, 208, 267, 301, 338, 380, 419, 451, 491, 522, 566, 634. See Appendix 14.

records the same transgressions with a farther note: "nor do they ever celebrate [Mass], nor hear Mass, by reason of their occupation with business; we warned them of these things in the presence of the abbot of Bec, and also against the use of featherbeds [or quilts, *culcitra*]." In 1253 quilts, fasts, flesh again: "they do not celebrate daily...they have no copy of [St Benedict's] Rule or of the Statutes [of Gregory IX]." In 1254, no Rule; fasts and flesh as before; "we commanded them, as often as they broke this rule, to do the penance prescribed in the Statutes of Pope Gregory, in default of which we would punish them otherwise. Item, women sometimes eat with them; we ordered that these should altogether be removed." In 1256, fasts, flesh, Rule as before; Odo admonishes them once again. In 1257 Mass sometimes neglected, flesh and fasts as usual; "we bade that the Rule be here observed, or the penance done which is prescribed in [Gregory IX's] statutes, or that they should beg licence from their abbot, who can at least dispense them from the penalty contained in the Statutes." In 1259 it is practically the same; no leave yet obtained from abbot: the same again in 1260. In 1261 fasts and flesh as usual, and the featherbeds have reappeared: the same story in 1262, when one monk was usually living there alone, contrary to canon law, and two others were with him at the moment "for the sake of recreation." In 1264, fasts, flesh, featherbeds and irregularity of celebrations; fasts, flesh and featherbeds again in 1265, and in 1266 and in 1269, except that in this, Odo's last visitation on the verge of his departure for the Crusade, there is no mention of featherbeds. We may find the same story in nearly all of these small cells; the monks' steady passive resistance beat the energetic archbishop.

And yet here, if anywhere, was the place and the person for regular discipline. Normandy was as loyal to the pope as the most loyal of medieval provinces; and for some time past it had been exceptionally fortunate in its archbishops<sup>1</sup>. Theobald, elected in 1222, is characterized by a contemporary as a man of inflexible will; in 1231 he was succeeded (after a brief interval) by Maurice, who successfully vindicated the rights of his see

<sup>1</sup> *Gallia Christiana*, vol. xi, pp. 61 ff.



against royal encroachments, and held a diocesan council for the reform of ecclesiastical discipline. "A man of fervent zeal, who accepted no man's person upon earth—neither king nor prince nor wild lord nor rich man—and who vehemently hated all unchaste priests, casting them forth from their churches and sending them to Rome for absolution." After another short vacancy, he was succeeded in 1236 by Peter, a specially disinterested prelate, who struggled hard against the indiscipline of his suffragans, and was finally made cardinal bishop of Albano. After him, in 1244, came Odo, abbot of St-Denis, who is recorded to have striven for monastic reform, and who earned an excellent character from all contemporary writers except Matthew Paris (*an.* 1247). Then, in 1248, came another and far greater Odo, a man fit to stand by the side of his older contemporary Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln.

He was of noble birth, apparently from Picardy; his brother, Sir Peter Rigaud, seems to have had land near Montreuil<sup>1</sup>; and Peter's son Adam, having joined the Franciscans, became his uncle's right-hand man<sup>2</sup>. Odo had also a sister, who became abbess of Abailard's Paraclete. He himself was probably born towards the end of the first decade of the thirteenth century, shortly after Normandy had been annexed to France. He studied at Paris under the famous Alexander of Hales; if he be indeed the author of a certain *Commentary on the Psalter* attributed to him, he had a keen eye for the foibles of university

<sup>1</sup> So Leclerc; but Bonnin puts the fief south-east of Paris, near Briecomte-Robert.

<sup>2</sup> Salimbene makes Adam the brother of Odo, who of course would usually call a nephew "brother Adam" as fellow-Franciscan. On the other hand, p. 475 of the register shows that there were two Adams, one brother and one nephew to the archbishop. The biographical details in my text are taken from the following sources; *Gallia Christiana*; *Hist. des Archevêques de Rouen par un religieux bénédictin de la congrégation de St-Maur* (Dom J.-F. Pommery), Rouen, 1667; P. Feret, *La Faculté de Théologie de Paris au M. A.* (1894, etc.), vol. I, p. 314 and vol. II, pp. 303 ff.; J.-V. Leclerc in *Hist. Litt. de la France*, vol. XXI, pp. 616 ff.; Salimbene, pp. 220, 434; A. Lecoy de la Marche, *L'Esprit de nos Aïeux* (Paris, n.d.), Mark of Lisbon, pt II, bk v, ch. 3; *Regestrum Visitationum Odonis Rigaldi*, ed. T. Bonnin (Rouen, 1852). There is a good detailed study of the contents of this diary by Léopold Delisle in *Bib. Éc. des Chartres*, vol. VIII (série II, vol. III), pp. 479 ff.; another by E. du Ménil in *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie*, série II, vol. VII (1847), pp. 107 ff. A good idea of contemporary and sub-contemporary opinions on the man can be formed from *Analecta Franciscana*, vol. III, pp. 220, 247, 314, 353.

pedants<sup>1</sup>. After taking his Doctorate of Theology in 1242, he probably taught as Hales's colleague; and Hales's example can scarcely have failed to influence him in taking the Franciscan frock. He was pretty certainly one of the four distinguished Franciscan theologians chosen officially to interpret the Rule in 1242; and in 1248 he accepted, under strong pressure from St Louis, the archbishopric of Rouen. For "he was of noble birth, and more noble in himself"; "a most excellent preacher of God's word, and above all a man of great prudence." Bonnin records a popular tradition of his election (p. iii). The Cathedral Chapter, uncertain whom to choose, was suddenly inspired to pitch upon the first cleric who should come in the morning to say his prayers in the Cathedral. Brother Odo, the Franciscan, had to preach that morning in the country; he came first into the Cathedral, to pray before the Holy Sacrament, and upon him the canons seized for their new archbishop. Whatever may be the value of this tradition, the fact is that not only the king's pressure was needed, but the pope also had to absolve him formally from the vow which he had taken on first joining the Franciscans, to renounce all ecclesiastical promotion.

The king's friendship he kept to the last; we find him officiating at royal marriages and funerals. It was he who went forward to meet our Henry III on his visit to the French court, and he again was chosen to publish one of the greatest treaties in English history, in a spot hard by the Sainte-Chapelle. His diary notes (Dec. 3, 1259): "We recited and published the composition made between the said two kings, in the garden of the lord king of France, in the presence of the said kings and of many prelates and barons of both countries; and there the said king of England did homage to the king of France." When St Louis was sick, it was Odo whom he wished to see: Odo was constantly with him in parliament; he followed the king upon his last crusade, was appointed executor to his will, and a member of the Council of Regency. All this time he had kept, as not all men did, equal favour with the popes. In 1273, he

<sup>1</sup> MS. Ball. Oxon. cod. 37, *Odo super Psalterium*, f. 2 a: "Quidam sunt tardi in scolis, ut qui senio sunt affecti, et ad sacram scripturam attendunt. . . de quibus [dicitur] iii. Reg. 1 [2]: *Queramus regi adolescentulam, etc. Dormivit itaque [Abisag] cum rege sed non cognovit eam.*"

was one of the three prelates commissioned to examine the evidence for the canonization of St Louis. Next year, at the Ecumenical Council of Lyons, he was one of a committee of three who were deputed to do most of the business, one of his colleagues being St Bonaventura. He died in the year following, on July 2, and was buried in the Lady Chapel of his own cathedral.

A sa mort, plusieurs objets d'une grande valeur furent légués par lui à sa cathédrale, entre autres une cloche magnifique qui porta son nom, et dont le poids était si grand que les sonneurs, pour la mettre en branle, obligés de soutenir leurs efforts par des libations répétées, donnèrent lieu à ce dicton normand : *Boire à tire la Rigaud*<sup>1</sup>.

Yet one of the archbishop's most constant cares had been to check among his flock those too liberal potations for which Normandy has always had a certain unenviable renown. Brother Adam had died six years earlier, just before Odo's departure for St Louis's second crusade.

Odo was consecrated in March 1248, and made his solemn entry into Rouen on Easter Day. In June, he had to attend the Provincial Chapter of the Franciscans at Sens; and here, by good fortune, we have a portrait of him by one of the most observant of all medieval chroniclers. St Louis was at Sens, on the way to his first disastrous crusade; but, more precious for us, the friar Salimbene of Parma was there also, with his childlike curiosity and instinct of mimicry and the child's touch of innocent malice in description. He tells us of the speeches; he criticizes the ladies' dress; he gives an unrivalled *menu* of a fast-day feast; he tells us of the king, born to command but coming now in a humble pilgrim dress, "having the face of an angel, and a mien full of grace." And then

when the king was already hard by our convent, all the Brethren went forth to meet him, that they might receive him with all honour. And Brother Rigaud of our Order, Professor of Theology at Paris, and Archbishop of Rouen, clad in his pontifical robes, hastened forth from the convent, crying as he went, "Where is the King? Where is the King?" So I followed him, for he went by himself as a man distraught, with his mitre on his head, and his pastoral staff in his hand. For he had fallen behindhand in robing himself, so that the

<sup>1</sup> Bonnin, p. vi.

other Brethren had already gone forth, and stood on either side of the street with their faces turned towards the King, in their eagerness to see him coming.

Later, in 1253, Salimbene saw Odo again at Ferrara, on his way to plead with the pope for full power to visit his suffragan dioceses. The archbishop, though he travelled with 80 mounted attendants, spent half of his income on charity; and at his dinner half of every dish went to the poor. The homeliness of his features was redeemed by the grace of his mind<sup>1</sup>.

Salimbene is not alone in testifying to his inward grace. He was famed not only for his eloquence in the chair and in the pulpit, but also for his ready repartee. A buffoon, finding himself opposite the prelate at some great man's table, plied him with an insulting riddle: "What is the difference between Rigald and Ribald?" "Only the breadth of this board," replied the archbishop. Another story of his sermons bears witness to far rarer qualities of mind<sup>2</sup>.

There was in France a lady much given to carnal vices, who for many years had intercourse with the devil. It befel that Brother Odo, who was afterwards Archbishop of Rouen, in a sermon at Orléans treated of the greatness of the Sacrament of Penance; and this great sinner, hearing him, had such compunction that, at the end of his sermon, she went and found the preacher, and said unto him: "If penance hath such virtue as you have said, I will make my confession, and prove in mine own person that spiritual good whereof you speak." And, with this purpose of confession, she asked the preacher whether, by virtue of confession, she could free herself from a most grievous sin and from the power of the demon. Brother Odo made answer: "Fear not, lady, but have true contrition and grief for your sins; confess, and doubt not that thou wilt forthwith be freed; nor can the demon entirely prevail against thee when once thou hast wholly confessed." So she made full confession, and Brother Odo absolved her, saying: "Trust in the Lord, for from henceforth the Demon will not be able to come unto thee." Now, as she was alone in her house in penitence, the devil came and threatened her; but he had no power to come unto her. And after two such

<sup>1</sup> These two passages are translated in full in chs. xii and xxi of *From St Francis to Dante*.

<sup>2</sup> Mark of Lisbon, *Chronicles*, pt II, bk v, c. 3: I quote from the Italian translation of 1680 (Naples, vol. II, p. 268). A somewhat similar tale is told of St Bernard; but it lacks the personal and almost humorous character of this story (P.L. 185, col. 287).

times, on the third he came back and said: "Even now letters of obedience are come to Brother Odo, commanding him to go unto the friary at Paris; and then he will not be able to help thee; but, when once he is gone, I shall return unto my liberty and have the same dominion over thee as of old." The lady was filled with great fear at these words, and went to her confessor, whom she found even as he was reading his prelate's letter bidding him go to Paris. Then with much weeping and fear she told him what the demon had said. Then said he: "Lady, who hath absolved thee from thy sins, God or Brother Odo? Return unto thine own house; and, if the devil come again, say unto him: 'Let Brother Odo go whithersoever he will; for it is God who hath absolved me from my sins.'" With that remedy she departed rejoicing and comforted; nor did the demon long delay his coming; but she with great faith spake even as Brother Odo had taught her. When the demon heard these words, he had great indignation thereat and made a great outcry and then fled away, saying: "Curses on him who hath taught thee that answer!" and from that time forth he returned no more to molest this penitent.

And, lastly, we are told how Odo was able to comfort St Louis on the death of his eldest son, when the great Vincent of Beauvais had laboured vainly with such consolation as his encyclopaedic learning could suggest<sup>1</sup>. Odo took for his text, as St Francis might have taken, that beautiful little apologue of *The Boor and the Bird* which, borrowed from the East, became one of the most popular of medieval tales<sup>2</sup>. "'Sire,' ended the archbishop, 'you see well that you cannot recall your son; and you must well believe that he is in paradise; wherefore you should take comfort.' Then the king saw that the archbishop spake truth; wherefore he took comfort and forgot somewhat of his mourning"<sup>3</sup>.

All these details are gleaned from exterior sources; but we may really learn most of the man through his diary, and the almost equally business-like *pouillé* of his diocese which, compiled originally by his predecessor, was brought up to date by Odo's frequent and full additions, enabling the archbishop to

<sup>1</sup> On p. 355 of his diary Odo has enregistered the pathetic letter in which St Louis announces his firstborn's death; on p. 436 we find the archbishop celebrating in person the marriage of the next son, Philip, who succeeded to his father's throne.

<sup>2</sup> It is admirably translated by Mr Eugene Mason in the volume of *Everyman's Library* entitled *Aucassin and Nicolette*.

<sup>3</sup> *Chronique de Rains* (1837), p. 236.

glean at a glance the statistical information about each parish which he needed for the free exercise of his pastoral authority<sup>1</sup>. It is no mere chance which has carried these two books through nearly seven centuries. They were recognized as business documents of primary importance, and were preserved by persons who had little interest, perhaps, in the soul of the man who worked at them. To the modern historian, the diary is priceless; few other volumes tell us so much about the social and economic condition of the medieval church; not even Johann Busch or Ambrogio Traversari has left us so full a picture, over so wide a field, of monastic and clerical life. For the student of visitation literature it merits all Horace's commendation of the classics—*nocturna versate manu, versate diurna*<sup>2</sup>.

But for the present we are mainly concerned with the light it throws upon its author. We see at the first glance that we have an exceptionally hardworking and business-like man. Having to visit the priory of Ouveille, he first consults his predecessor's memoranda, and is able to point out to the prior that the late archbishop's injunctions have not been faithfully followed<sup>3</sup>; we find constant indications of his studying similar records to help his memory. Where anything important is to be done, he takes care to have a number of unexceptional witnesses, whose names he enregisters. Before holding his provincial councils, he does what we find the popes doing soon after; he appoints trustworthy and distinguished men to make formal inquisition and report whatever they find in need of reform; nor can we blame the archbishop for the evident difficulty of finding men who will faithfully perform this invidious duty. When the nuns of Bondeville complained that the pigeons hindered their choir-services by flying in and out of the unglazed windows, "we prescribed that the greater part of the windows should be

<sup>1</sup> Printed in vol. XXIII of *Recueil des hist. de la Gaule, etc.* pp. 228 ff. For other works ascribed to him, see Feret, *l.c.* p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Jenkins (*Ch. Quart. Review*, Oct. 1925, p. 84) very much underestimates the personal character of this diary. No doubt it was not written with his own hand, and the formal documents which occur here and there were not even dictated by him; but the book has a personal value which puts it into a category quite distinct from any other episcopal register that has been printed. Bonnin, with all his exaggerations in the passage which the Professor criticizes, gives a truer impression here.

<sup>3</sup> p. 10; the other references in this paragraph will be found on pp. 170 (pp. 125, 356, 387 inquisitions), 512, 419.

stopped or plastered up ; for many were superfluous." The nuns of Saint-Saens protested when he prohibited that easiest of all financial resources, the veiling of a new sister, and so procuring a lump sum as her dowry. Odo met their protest by promising to judge each case on its own merits, if the nuns would first send the postulant or her relations to him for cross-examination on the business side of the question<sup>1</sup>.

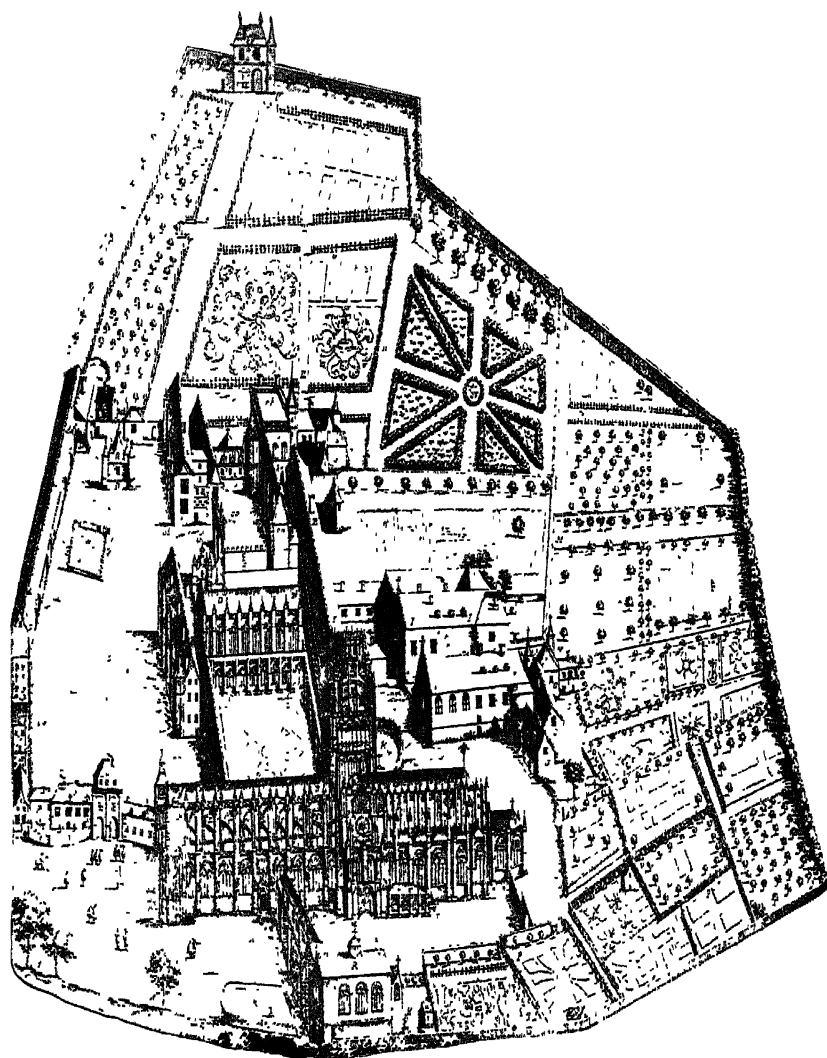
For he never spared any trouble that came in the way of his duty. As early as 1251 we find him detained in one of his manors by "a grievous rheumatism," which recurs with lamentable frequency; in 1259 it is "my ancient rheumatism"; in 1268 it is so bad that only God's grace supports him to sing High Mass at Rouen Cathedral even on St Francis's day; in 1269, on the eve of his formal leave-takings before the crusade, he is too ill to attend Mass at St-Denis on the very feast of the Patron Saint<sup>2</sup>. Yet we find him, for more than 20 years, busier than we might expect from a younger man in perfect health. "Forget the snorting steam and piston-stroke; think only of the pack-horse on the down," and consider what it means when we find that Odo, in 1250, visited the five suffragan dioceses as well as his own of Rouen. The first few pages of his diary are fairly typical; he starts on July 17 at Gravelle near Havre, and has covered more than 1200 miles before the Christmas holidays. On his journey-days he averaged 15 miles; and, even on the days when he rested in his different manors, he was evidently concerned with business<sup>3</sup>. On one at least of the three pilgrimages which he took at different times for the healing of his rheumatism, he went on foot—*pedes*—from Paris to Our Lady of Chartres. This journey of some 55 miles took him seven days; in all probability he went barefoot<sup>4</sup>. But the most striking instance was in 1259. On April 20 he was ill at his manor of

<sup>1</sup> Few points come out more clearly in this diary than Odo's fundamental reasonableness, patience, and common sense. His younger fellow-Franciscan, a scarcely less energetic visitor, Archbishop Pecham of Canterbury, showed also many tokens of discretion; see his *Reg. Epist.* R.S. pp. 111-12, 286, 346, 620, 730, 731, 851, 904, 951.

<sup>2</sup> Sickness and pilgrimages on pp. 113, 147-9, 159, 334, 355, 368, 404, 466, 595, 604-5, 612, 635.

<sup>3</sup> There is a gap of nearly a month in the diary; the total distance covered may be nearly 1500 miles.

<sup>4</sup> p. 404. The stages were Bourg-la-Reine, Palaiseau, Gommery, Rochefort, Ablis, Monceaux, Chartres.



THE ABBEY OF ST-OUEN-DE-ROUEN IN ABOUT 1690 A.D.





Fresnes, not far from Rouen, but letters came to say that the king also lay sick at Fontainebleau, and desired to see him at once;

whither indeed we hastened without delay, notwithstanding our own infirmity, and lay that night at Genainville. Here another special messenger found us, bringing letters from the said lord king, wherein he bade us come no farther, since, by God's grace, he was much better and was convalescent; wherefore we abode there, at our own expense, that night and all next day. On the 22nd, we received letters from the lord king, that he was so sick that he feared he might be at the point of death; at the sight whereof we set out forthwith towards him, yet not without great difficulty, hastening as best we could both by carriage and on horseback; and that night we slept at Paris [35 miles]. *Ap.* 23 at Fontainebleau [40 miles], where we found the lord king in bed and, by God's grace, in fairly good plight.

He stayed the next four days at Fontainebleau; thence he went to Meudon and Villeneuve-St-George and St-Cloud, "where, on *Ap.* 30, we were so grievously afflicted with fever and rheumatism that we were compelled to stay and take to our bed; for we could go no farther." Here he lay for six weeks, unable to journey but keeping a few business records; only on June 15 was he able to move to Paris; ten days afterwards he sang High Mass at Rouen, and on July 8 he began his monastic visitations again. These, however, were not the longest of his journeys; already in 1248 he had once been compelled to ride in a single day from St-Denis to Gaillonel, some 55 miles; but then he was in health.

To a man who put work and duty so unhesitatingly in the first place, opportunities came which others would have missed. It is as Pasteur said: the flash of revelation comes only to the man who has steadily prepared himself beforehand. On a pilgrimage to Gournay for his own personal health, Odo made a point also of keeping his archiepiscopal ears open; and thus he heard of a crime which the connivance of the canons might have concealed from him as official visitor<sup>1</sup>. If his diary stands

<sup>1</sup> p. 466. "We kissed the relics; after which we drew aside the dean and one of the resident canons and examined them as to the state of the church. [Among other black sheep,] Simon, the chaplain, was in very evil repute for incontinence, and it was said that he had soundly beaten—*verberaverat multum bene*—a certain woman named Haisia, for that she would not give her daughter up to him; which daughter, notwithstanding, he had taken

so easily at the head of all medieval visitation-records, it is because the man himself had this infinite capacity for taking pains.

We find the archbishop sternly insistent upon his rights in all things that concerned his office, and therefore himself as trustee. At the cost of a journey to Rome, and long negotiations both then and before, he at last vindicated his unquestionable right as metropolitan to visit his suffragan dioceses every three years; thus he ended a struggle of generations which his predecessors had vainly attempted to decide<sup>1</sup>. One of his manors had been pillaged during the vacancy, and a man had been killed in the tumult; with prelates and popes, even more than with earthly potentates, death immediately let loose a scramble to carry off whatever could safely be stolen<sup>2</sup>. The chief offender in this case was an important vassal of the count of Dreux; but Odo's hand was stronger than the count's protection, and finally the offender was brought not only to pay for the damage but also to the most humiliating penance, which may be given in Odo's own words:

That thou shalt take with thee, upon thy solemn oath, eleven of the greatest and best known, whether by wealth or birth or power, as the best men of the communes [which joined with thee in this outrage]; and that, with these eleven, thou shalt make twelve processions on Sundays or in other solemn fashion, after the form here following. They shall go bareheaded and barefooted, in their shirt and drawers, and thou barefooted with linen drawers and shirt of sackcloth, each holding in his hands a rod wherewith he shall take discipline from the priests when the procession is done, after public proclamation of the offence for which ye undergo this penance.

by force." If this seems almost incredible, compare the similar case from Lisieux cathedral (p. 297): "Canon Ralph Coytel was defamed for that he, by himself or through his accomplices, was said to have done violence to a certain woman, whom he would have dragged by force into his house to satisfy his lust. The woman resisted and began to cry out; and the said Ralph or his accomplices constricted the said woman's throat so violently that she is said to have died not long afterwards." In neither case is there any indication that Odo was able to inflict any such punishment as modern justice would require.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pommeraye, pp. 477 ff. One of these decisions in his favour was sufficiently important to be embodied in canon law as a definite precedent for all time (*Sext. Decret.* lib. III, tit. xx, c. 1).

<sup>2</sup> See Bonnin's note to p. 11; cf. *From St Francis to Dante*, ch. xxi, and *Reg. Grandisson*, vol. III, pp. xii, xix.

These processions were to take place, *inter alia*, at the cathedrals of Rouen, Évreux, Lisieux, Beauvais, Amiens, on the spot where the riot had been committed, and at Gamaches, where the offender was Castellan; the whole penance was to be worked off within eight months of this sentence<sup>1</sup>.

On another occasion, riding from Meudon to Giset, on St Matthew's day, the archbishop caught sight of men working at their ploughs, "wherefore we caused their horses to be brought to Meulan, for that they had irreverently presumed to work on so holy a day"; nor were the beasts released until their owners had found bail and promised to stand by the archbishop's decision in the matter of punishment<sup>2</sup>. These were peasants, but Odo was no less uncompromising with poachers, however nobly born. On one occasion the offenders were compelled to come and publicly offer a calf, as part of their formal penance for a slain deer<sup>3</sup>. He did not hesitate, as indeed no other orthodox prelate of his day would have hesitated, to burn heretics or relapsed Jewish converts<sup>4</sup>.

Yet at bottom this man was essentially pacific; certainly he took seriously his Franciscan duty of peacemaker. Not only between husband and wife; that was part of his episcopal duties as ordinary judge in cases matrimonial, though it would be difficult to find other bishops who troubled to enregister these pacifications for future reference<sup>5</sup>. But on other occasions he was called from his immediate work to make peace for others—to decide the dispute about St-Éloi's relics at Noyon;

<sup>1</sup> pp. 11, 23. It must be noted that he once imposed a very humiliating penance upon a priest who had struck a parishioner in church with his fist; the offender was to be flogged in his shirt and drawers, at the next ruridecanal chapter, in the presence of his brother-priests (p. 310).

<sup>2</sup> p. 375; cf. p. 501, where he inflicts a heavy fine on a carter's wife for working on Sunday.

<sup>3</sup> For his defence of game and other archiepiscopal property see, *inter alia*, pp. 154, 274, 294, 347, 361, 375, 579, 606.

<sup>4</sup> pp. 160, 541.

<sup>5</sup> *E.g.* p. 241: "This day, in our presence, Garnier and Adeline de Chaumont, husband and wife, swore to treat each other henceforth with marital affection." P. 280: "This same day, Guillaume Bernard swore before us that he would treat Emmeline, called Noble, his wife, with marital affection; and he had given his faith on a former occasion that he would keep his oath on pain of 100 shillings; and now he gave pledges that he would keep his oath on pain of £20; viz. Gautier de Chernin, Richard de Buez, who pledged their faith for him; these two dwell at Corneville." There are other similar cases.

to appease a quarrel between the canons of Chartres about the election of their bishop, or those of St-Laurent about their prior; to reconcile the bishops of Évreux and Coutances with their chapters; to reconcile the count of Bar with the count of Luxemburg<sup>1</sup>. And perhaps the best testimonial of all is that letter from the monks of Mont-St-Michel, who held themselves wronged by some of Odo's official claims. They sent him documents which, they hoped, would prove their case, and added:

Nevertheless, seeing that we, trusting in your goodness and your pure and holy conscience, the praise whereof hath spread even to the eastern peoples and to different parts of the world, have neither the will nor the right to trouble in any way your kindly heart, nor by any means to provoke you to wrath, Therefore we have consented with one accord that you should make enquiry through trustworthy men, and such as walk by the light of truth, to judge whether indeed you ought to take this procuration from us, in the manor aforesaid<sup>2</sup>.

For his daily journal bears constant witness to the considerate nature of this disciplinarian whom his contemporaries called the Model of Good Life—*Exemplar Vitae*. He tells one superior to supply his monks with better beer<sup>3</sup>; in countless cases he insists on a better care of the sick monks in infirmary. He reminds abbesses not to stint their nuns in the matter of the ginger which they crave. If he seems intolerant to the ladies' pet birds and squirrels and hens and schoolgirls, it is because he finds these not only alien but disturbing to conventual discipline. He showed great patience on trying occasions, as when the door was illegally shut in his face at Gisors<sup>4</sup>. When he reports that a canon of Caen is liable to very public and scandalous exhibitions of drunkenness, he notes his palliating weakness of head—*sed habet debile caput*—it did not take much to upset him<sup>5</sup>. He is not too scandalized at Tréport when a monastic tippler, because the prior would not give him to drink, "went out into the court and slew two of the prior's pigs;

<sup>1</sup> pp. 392, 359, 371, 414, 446, 589.

<sup>2</sup> p. 558. What we know of Odo is often strikingly reminiscent of Archbishop Temple; these monks, like the Rugby schoolboy, recognized him as "a beast, but a just beast."

<sup>3</sup> p. 209; cf. pp. 206, 384, 409, 430, 468, 472, 540-1, 543, 563-4, 573, 610, 630.

<sup>4</sup> pp. 91-3 etc.; cf. p. 395.

<sup>5</sup> p. 261: the next cases are on pp. 100 and 109.

moreover, he always carried a knife with him"; or, again, when a monk of St-Michel-sur-Vernon was found to be given to nightwalking in armour, giving and receiving wounds. He is far from going out of his way to record unwarranted suspicions; on the contrary, the book bears constant witness to much that has been omitted because he did not feel absolutely compelled to set it down. Take, for instance, the nunnery of St-Aubin. Here he visited in 1251 and 1252, and noted nothing worse than that the nuns sometimes received presents, or ate flesh in the presence of secular folk, or went out and ate with their own relations. Yet in 1254, less than 18 months after his last visit, he notes: "Alice of Rouen is incontinent; she has again given birth to a son, by a certain priest of Beauvais." This "again" tells its own tale; the first lapse is not noted in the diary. And, when we look at the actual punishments inflicted upon undoubted offenders, we are startled at this strong man's leniency. I have quoted a crucial instance at length in the first of my *Medieval Studies*; but all his dealings with his clergy show him anxious to avoid extremities, so long as he can bring the sinners to some sort of amendment. In many cases, he is perfectly satisfied if only he can get the black sheep out of his own diocese; for even the strictest of medieval disciplinarians often looked no farther than their own immediate district, as modern discipline is often bounded by national frontiers. Only twice in the whole diary, I believe, does he show impatience and something like despair (pp. 495, 598). The first occasion was at St-Ouen-de-Rouen, where there was peculation and mismanagement, and the archbishop found it impossible to get a real statement of accounts from the abbot. The other was at the nunnery of Saint-Saens, after nearly 20 years of unremitting labour for reform. This was a bad house; but the last visit had seemed to promise a little improvement; and in 1267 the archbishop may well have ridden up that smiling valley with more cheerful anticipations than the conventual visitor could always afford. But, when he came to enquire, he found at last that

the Prioress was ill-famed with Renaud, priest of Ourcy; Perronelle de Dreux, the abbess, was much defamed, as of old, with Raoul de Maintru. We found Agnes d'Equetot and Jeanne de Morainville liars and perjured, when we had asked them certain questions under

oath; wherefore we left the convent almost impatient and downcast—*quasi impacientes et tristes*.

For in fact, he was a beaten man in this, which we look upon as the main struggle. His contemporary, the Dominican Cardinal Hugues de St-Cher, was at this moment recording the bitterness of his own soul here and there in his great Bible-commentary, and confessing frankly to himself and the world that, at the rate at which things were going with the regular and secular clergy, some sort of revolution seemed inevitable<sup>1</sup>. We shall see in the two next chapters how small was even Odo's immediate impression upon the great world, or even upon the microcosm of monasticism in his own province. Yet the very pages which tell this so plainly to us, whose good fortune it is to stand far above the dust of that particular battle, reveal with equal distinctness a man seldom discouraged by the weariness of daily conflict, or by the fear of a merely partial success. The more closely we study this diary, in itself so unstudied and spontaneous, the more we must admire and love the man, wondering why no contemporary considered it worth while to leave us a full-length portrait of this confidant of St Louis, this trusted counsellor to successive popes, this labourer in God's vineyard from the first hour to the setting sun. As it is, we see him only by broken glimpses, like a great mountain revealed for moments by rents in the mist and withdrawn the moment afterwards. Here we find him in a satirical epigram, there again in some casual anecdote told to illustrate quite other things; but, behind, there stands always that solid mass of twenty years' hard work in the Register, incomparably greater than any other similar record of its time that has come down to us, and probably greater than any that was made. Even a man like St Louis is only an incident in it; and there are other incidents equally suggestive for all who care to read between the lines. When brother Adam died—brother not only in the flesh, but in the brotherhood of St Francis and of Christ, and true yokefellow for 21 years of unremitting labour—then Odo might have cried aloud as St Bernard cried in that funeral-sermon over the knightly Gerard: "He was my brother by blood, but more than my brother by religion...the joys of life were shared

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 34.

between us; its sadness and gloom are mine alone." All that, and much more, is implicit in the brief entries in Odo's diary for 1269:

*July 28 and 29.* At [my manor of] Déville [by Rouen], my lord the king being at Rouen [preparing for his last crusade]... *Aug. 3.* At Maretot; this day, brother Adam died. *Aug. 4,* at the Franciscan convent of Rouen, by God's help, we buried the body of the said brother, and spent the night at our manor. *Aug. 5 and 6,* at Fresnes, where we had with us our venerable brother R[aoul], by God's grace bishop of Évreux... *Aug. 12,* at Déville, and the lord bishop of Auxerre with us... *Aug. 15,* at Rouen, for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin; and with us the bishops of Lunden [in Sweden] and of Auxerre.

The study of this business diary—and few books will better repay a close study—shows us a man of real chivalry, not only by birth but by character; a soldier's son (here again like our own Archbishop Temple), fit to play the highest parts as soldier and statesman, but by choice a soldier of Christ. Through him, we may grasp two points which ought to save us from over-emphasis in either direction. First, the steady civilizing work of the Church during the Dark and Middle Ages. Secondly, the slow progress of that ideal, by reason of the mass of unredeemed evil against which the Church had to work, among which she must work, and which therefore, so far infected her that a large fraction of society finally sought salvation in a new religious synthesis: made for themselves, if not a new Church, at least a new conception of the Church, as a federation of different states rather than a single absolute monarchy. The work of a comparatively inconspicuous figure like Odo shows us, in truth, a far nobler side of the Middle Ages than that brilliant, but often superficial pageantry which is most familiar to the reading public. In him we may see the embodiment of Matthew Arnold's sober and encouraging reminder, that "tasks in hours of insight willed may be through hours of gloom fulfilled." When we are tempted to lay too much stress on the gulf that yawned in those days between Christian teaching and Christian practice, here is a breath of open, bracing sea-air to keep our thoughts sweet. Taking more intimate stock of the real men and women of the Middle Ages, one after another, as contemporary documents reveal them to us, we realize more and



more the admirable proportions of Chaucer's portrait-gallery; and, after descending by gradual degrees from the worthy Knight to the Wife of Bath, we are sure to come, over and over again, upon such redeeming touches as the Poor Parson and the model Ploughman. These are the men who gave its abiding force to the religion of their day, and to whom medieval civilization certainly owes more than to the crusades, and perhaps even more than to all its elaborate hierarchical organization, and its attempts to solve the problem of Church and State. And it is from such men as this that we may take most encouragement amid our own failures and imperfections in this later age. Odo's own Master found him unspotted from the world, though the world did not find him picturesque enough for canonization. There was no political faction interested in attributing to him those divine honours with which Edward II, Thomas of Lancaster and other more or less disreputable party-leaders were dignified after their death. The miracles performed at Edward's shrine brought in money enough to re-fashion Gloucester Cathedral; but, though Odo had quietly distributed half of his income in charity during his lifetime<sup>1</sup>, no miracles were wrought at his tomb. The world cast its grimy work upon him; he drudged heroically for a whole lifetime through dust and disorder; and he stands, with our own Grosseteste, among those who have laboured too steadily and prosaically to earn the effusive gratitude of posterity. Here, again, is a bond between Odo's Normandy and our England. The English Franciscans of the thirteenth century were noted throughout Christendom for their superior average regularity of observance, yet they produced no Franciscan saint. Our Church life in general was perhaps the most respectable of all, yet few medieval Englishmen since the Conquest were canonized, and none at all after St John of Bridlington, who died in 1379. The true *legenda* of Brother Odo is to be found in Salimbene, from whose autobiography we might collect a small but choice calendar of unsainted saints.

He was one of the greatest clerks in the world; he was professor at Paris and lectured many years on theology in the Franciscan convent. He was a most excellent disputant and a gracious preacher;

<sup>1</sup> Salimbene in *M.G.H.* vol. xxxii, p. 434; a single incident from which wider deductions may fairly be drawn.

he wrote a Commentary on the Sentences [of Peter Lombard].... He loved much not only his own Order, but also the Friars Preachers, and was their benefactor. He was foul of face, but gracious in his manners and his works; he was a holy man, devoted to God, and made a good ending; may his soul, by God's mercy, rest in peace! He had a brother in the Order, fair to see and a great clerk, whose name was Adam le Rigaud. I have seen both men oftentimes and in many places<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *M.G.H.* vol. xxxii, p. 434.

## CHAPTER XV

### ODO'S VISITATIONS

A FEW pages of the book itself will give some idea of the man and his task. The first and eighth leaves are missing; he had begun visiting within a few days of his meeting with St Louis at Sens, but the first surviving entry is that of July 17. I translate the diary just as it comes, except for the omission of a few formalities and of matters unconcerned with monastic visitation.

*July 17.* We came to Graville and received our fees and visited the priory. We found all in good order. Their yearly revenue is about £300 of Tours; they owe nothing. They have enough bread and wine to last until the harvest. The office of prior was vacant; and as the canons deputed the choice to me, after taking an oath from the canons, and noting each vote separately, I chose Richard, prior of St Mary Magdalene, and gave him letters of institution under the form here following...

*July 18.* Spent the night at Montivilliers, at the expense of the abbess<sup>1</sup>.

*July 19.* At the same place, and again at the cost of the abbess. We visited the nunnery and found all in good order: in the evening we came to Lillebonne and slept in the castle.

*July 20.* We came to Jumièges and visited the abbey. We found that Brother William de Beaunay and Brother William de Bourg-Echard were ill-famed of abominable vice<sup>2</sup>; we decreed that they should be banished to other monasteries, there to expiate their transgressions. Moreover, we found that the subprior quarrels with his brethren; we decreed that he should be altogether removed from his office of subprior.

<sup>1</sup> We learn from a later entry that the statutory number of nuns here was sixty, with income of £2500 tournois (see p. 451); therefore about £12,000 in modern pre-war values, or £200 per nun. Odo nearly always gives his calculations in money of Tours, in which the pound equals 4s. sterling.

<sup>2</sup> *Infamati de pessimo vicio*. For the legal signification of *infamatus*, see p. 237 below. *Pessimus* was constantly used in the Middle Ages as a positive adjective with the signification here given: even so good a scholar as Petrus de Cella, for instance, gives it a comparative form of its own, *pessimius* (P.L. vol. 202, col. 617). *Pessimum vicium* is a technical visitatorial phrase for unnatural offences.

*July 21.* We came to [our own manor of] Déville, where we lay that night and those of the 22nd and 23rd.

*July 24.* We ate at Saint-Mathieu, with the Friars Preachers, but at our own costs.

[Here the archbishop was chosen arbitrator in a murder-case: his verdict was (a) that Robert Sain should quit Normandy for 15 years, and not return even then unless by special leave of the murdered man's relations, and unless he could show letters testimonial from the Templars or Hospitallers that he had spent at least two of these years in the Holy Land; (b) that the relations should give the archbishop formal letters to the effect that they would consider him as justly recalled when he should have fulfilled these above-named conditions.]

*July 25.* Came to St-Victor-en-Caux and visited there.

*July 26.* Came to Auffay and visited there.

*July 27.* At Dieppe, at our own cost.

*July 28, 29.* At Alliermont, at our own cost.

*July 30.* At Wanchy. There are no monks there, but the priory paid the costs<sup>1</sup>.

*July 31.* At Envermeu, where we visited the priory. We found that their income was £400 and more: they are in debt to the amount of £300. The prior does not keep accounts; we bade him compute with his monks at least four times yearly. They sometimes eat flesh without necessity; we bade them abstain from flesh foods.

*Aug. 1.* At Tréport, at the cost of the abbey.

*Aug. 2.* At Eu, at the cost of St Laurence's monastery, which we visited.

*Aug. 3.* At the same place, at our own cost.

That day, the abbot swore and pledged his faith that, before the 15th of December next, he would resign his monastery at our counsel, and gave us the letters promissory hereafter recited<sup>2</sup>.... We gave him as counsellors the Prior, the Subprior, the Sacristan and Roger Lebret.

*Aug. 4.* We came to Foucarmont at our own expense.

*Aug. 5.* To Neufchâtel, at the expense of the priory of Noient. There are no monks in the priory.

*Aug. 6.* To Neufchâtel, at the cost of the parishioners of St Peter's Church there, which we dedicated that day.

*Aug. 7.* We visited the nunnery of Bival, and found some of the nuns defamed of the vice of incontinence. That same day, the

<sup>1</sup> This was a priory dependent upon St-Ouen-de-Rouen. Like many others, it had fallen into decay and was farmed out by the monks of St-Ouen; but the archbishop was able to claim his visitation-fees from the priory estate.

<sup>2</sup> The document attributes his resignation to age and infirmity.

abbess resigned her dignity into our hands, and we gave the nuns leave to elect her successor, for which they appointed the next day. That night we lay at Beaubec, at the expense of the priory there.

*Aug. 8.* Again at Beaubec, at the monks' expense; we dedicated their infirmary chapel.

*Aug. 9.* At Beaussault, at the Prior's cost. Visited the Priory, which has a revenue of [cut off by binder] pounds a year, and owes £26. We found all in good order. That same day, the nuns of Bival presented to us their abbess-elect under the form here following... Which election we confirmed in the following letter...

*Aug. 10.* At Saint-Saens, at the prior's expense. We visited there. We found that they keep not the fasts prescribed by the Rule: we bade them observe these more fully. *Item*, they ate flesh freely; we bade them abstain from flesh food. *Item*, they kept not silence. *Item*, there were not three monks there, though there were formerly six. *Item*, they have £300 revenue, and owed £40.

*Aug. 11.* We were at the priory of St-Lô-de-Rouen, at the Prior's cost: here we found all in good order, except that they owed £400, with an income of about £700.

*Aug. 12.* At Mont-Ste-Catherine [by Rouen] where we visited, at our own expense. We found that they sometimes hurry through their services, and especially the Hours of the Blessed Virgin; we bade them say these more slowly. *Item*, we found that some kept not silence well; we enjoined a stricter observance. *Item*, that some will not accuse their brethren [in Chapter] when they break the rule of silence; we bade and enjoined that each should accuse the other without any acceptance of persons. *Item*, in their dependent priories they eat flesh freely; we bade the abbot see to this, and that abstinence from flesh should be enforced in the priories. *Item*, we bade the Abbot show a balance-sheet four times a year. They have £2000 a year; they owe not so much but that more is owed to them. At this same abbey we found that Brother Samson is defamed of private property, of incontinence, and of disturbing the common peace.

[The next nine days were spent at the manor of Déville, at Rouen, and on a journey to St-Denis, probably to see the king.]

*Aug. 21.* At Gaillonel, at the cost of the priory.

*Aug. 22.* At Velly, at the cost of the priory. Here we visited, and found a monk named Renaud, who would answer no questions; nay, he departed from us. *Item*, there was also an elderly monk who knew nought of the state of the priory.

[The next twelve days again are spent in travelling, and in visiting St-Ouen-de-Rouen (burned down a few days before).]

*Sept. 4.* At St-George-de-Boscherville, where we received our fees and visited, finding all in good order.

*Sept. 5.* At Bourg-Achard, at the expense of the priory, which we visited.

*Sept. 6.* At Equiquelon, at the parishioners' cost: here we dedicated St Mary's parish church.

*Sept. 7.* At Bec<sup>1</sup>, where we visited and found all well. They owe only £400.

*Sept. 8, 9.* Still at Bec, at the monks' cost.

*Sept. 10.* To Corneville, where we had our fees and visited, finding that their revenues are some £240, and they owe £120. *Item*, we found two women received as sisters; we decreed that henceforth no women should be received. *Item*, in three of their priories there was only one canon each; we directed that another should be sent to bear each of these company, or else that these three should be recalled to the parent house<sup>2</sup>. All else was in good order.

*Sept. 11.* We returned to Bourg-Achard and renewed our visitation. We found that lay folk stayed in the choir during service; we commanded that this should cease. Moreover we commanded that such monks as were not in priests' orders should confess and communicate at least once a month. There are other matters which I must see to later on.

*Sept. 12.* At [our manor of] Déville, where Sir William d'Auricher, knight [put in an appeal asserting his own right to the advowson of Ste-Marie-d'Angierville] in the following words...

*Sept. 13.* At Chèvreville, at the cost of the steward of the priory. There are no monks there.

*Sept. 14.* At Périers, at the cost of the priory. There are no monks there.

*Sept. 15.* At Beaulieu. Their revenue is £450, and they owe £180. All is in good order.

*Sept. 16-20.* At Déville and Rouen; [ordination and consecration of Abbess of Bival.]

*Sept. 21.* Visited the priory of Estouteville. We found that they used quilts, which we forbade for the future. *Item*, they ate flesh; this also we forbade. There were only two monks in the priory.

*Sept. 22.* We came again to Ouville<sup>3</sup>. We found that the prior wandered abroad when he should have been in his cloister; he is not in the cloister one day in five; *item*, he followeth not the conventual usages; *item*, he is drunken, and of a shameful drunkenness, so that he hath sometimes lain drunken in the fields; *item*, he frequenteth feasts, drinking-bouts and revels with layfolk; *item*, he is ill-famed of

<sup>1</sup> Lanfranc's and Anselm's abbey.

<sup>2</sup> Not only a recent decree of Gregory IX, but three recent provincial councils of Rouen, had attempted to put an end to the abuse of monks living alone in dependent cells.

<sup>3</sup> The first visit must have been on the lost leaf.

a woman in Grainville and of the lady de Robertot, as also of a woman in Rouen, called Agnes. *Item*, brother Geoffrey is publicly ill-famed of the wife of Walter of Equiquelon, who hath had a child by him. *Item*, the revenues are not clearly recorded; we commanded that they should be better written down. *Item*, we found that the prior, in spite of our predecessor's prohibition that he should be executor to no man's will, hath undertaken that of Drogo. That same day, we spent the night at the priory of Longueil, where there are no monks.

[At this point, Odo was forced to interrupt his conventual visitations in order to deal with the parish priests of the district he had just traversed. I have given a good many details of this visitation in my *From St Francis to Dante* (2nd ed. p. 428), and on p. 290 of my *Medieval Garner*. The totality of his first parochial visitation shows that he found 18 per cent. of his parishes cursed with drunken or concubinary priests<sup>1</sup>.]

*Sept. 23.* Came to Basqueville. We found that the monks go forth from the cloister without leave; secular folk frequently come into the cloister; they did not keep the fasts prescribed in the Rule, and they used quilts. We decreed that the monks should not go forth from their cloister, without previous leave from the prior; that no seculars should enter the cloister; and that the regular fasts should be kept. *Item*, we found that Laurence and Geoffrey are ill-famed of excessive wandering about the town against the prior's will; they promised good amendment on this point, so that we should hear a good report of them. The priory has £200 a year; they owe about £40.

*Sept. 24.* At Longueville, at the prior's expense. They are exempt [from episcopal visitation]. That same day, the prior of Ouville swore in our presence that he would in all things obey our will, whether in resigning his priory or in other matters<sup>2</sup>.

This completes the tenth page of the diary, which runs to more than 600 more, with much other matter by way of sup-

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Claude Jenkins, in *Ch. Quart. Review*, October 1925, has gone more fully into these statistics. He calculates (p. 89), "that the whole diocese of Rouen in the middle of the thirteenth century had about 200 criminous or seriously unsatisfactory clerks in 1117 cures in the course of over 21 years"; and he truly notes that Odo's second visitation showed a much cleaner bill than the first. But see Appendix 14, where I give reasons for seriously discounting some of the professor's arguments.

<sup>2</sup> The diary records no such resignation; Odo knew how truly his friend St Bonaventura spoke when he said that bishops were often compelled to tolerate sinners because they could find none better to take their places. Four years later, the prior was excommunicated for contumacy. Though Ouville still made no pretence of keeping Gregory IX's recent constitutions as to flesh-eating, etc., yet later visits revealed no such startling scandals as these of 1248.

plement. These pages give a not very exaggerated idea of the whole book: not even this man, building on the work of energetic predecessors, could effect a radical reform in his province. All the faults Odo notes, almost without exception, are emphasized in the papal statutes for monastic reform which had been solemnly published by Gregory IX in 1236, only twelve years before this diary begins. A good many monasteries, Odo found, did not possess a copy of these statutes; some had not even a copy of St Benedict's Rule. It is instructive to measure his success in checking two of the most serious abuses condemned in the Gregorian statutes. "Let no monk," writes the pope, "live by himself in any priory; but let one or more fellow-monks be sent to keep him company, if the revenues of the house will bear this; otherwise, let him be called back to the cloister." Again,

Let no monk eat flesh in any place, whether within or without a monastery, except according to the prescriptions of the Rule [*i.e.* when sick, or by special dispensation of abbot]. We utterly forbid those refectations of flesh which have hitherto been accustomed among monks of sound health in certain monasteries and at certain times; and we forbid certain salted preparations of flesh—*salsaturas de certis carnibus*—as strictly as we forbid flesh itself. Whosoever shall presume to eat flesh against these prohibitions aforesaid, let him for the first or even the second offence be disciplined according to the Rule [*i.e.* corporal chastisement]; for the third offence, let him fast on bread and water on the Wednesday and Friday next following; if however he should habitually break the rule, let him be subjected to some grievous punishment. If the delinquent be an abbot, let him be restricted to bread and water on the Monday Wednesday and Friday; and if he offered habitually, and refuse to amend even at the warning of the diocesan or the visitors, let him be deprived of his office.

This decree had been ratified by Odo Rigaldi and his suffragans at three Provincial Councils; in 1257, 1260 and 1263. Let us see how it was kept.

Dividing his diary into three nearly equal periods of time, we get the following results from the 51 houses for which his visitations are recorded:

1248-57.	Breaches of the flesh rule,	102:	monks found alone in priories,	44
1257-63.	"	77:	"	14
1263-69.	"	58:	"	17



This result, from twenty years of unremitting labour, goes far to explain why, a century later, Benedict XII frankly abandoned Gregory IX's attempt to enforce the flesh-rule, and permitted relaxations which, taken together with the monks' own unlicensed extensions of his decree, practically amounted to an abrogation of this clause of the Rule.

It has already been indicated, and will be emphasized again later, that we cannot take Odo's notes as absolutely exhaustive; the book itself shows that he has only noted the faults most directly in conflict with Gregory's statutes, or such as the visitor needed to watch most carefully in future. Visiting Mont-St-Michel in 1256, he notes (p. 247): "Moreover, we enjoined the abbot to cast forth from his service Pofunee [*sic*], his squire, who had formerly been found to be hurtful to the abbey. This we had also commanded in our former visitation, but he had not yet obeyed." There is no such record in the earlier pages of the diary. Again, though he must have been constantly confirming children, this is scarcely ever mentioned; there are only fifteen such records in three years. And, most important consideration of all, it is evident that much escaped even his vigilance. Not only can we trace this in many isolated cases, which must have been typical<sup>1</sup>, but we can see it also on a large scale. It is remarkable that far more offences are recorded in the diocese of Rouen than in those of his suffragans, though Rouen had enjoyed some generations of better discipline than these others, and the attempts of suffragans to resist Odo's right of visitation does not suggest disciplinary zeal on their part. The five nunneries he visited in other dioceses, with their 237 nuns, supply only four cases of incontinence; yet in Rouen diocese there are 39 such cases, concerning 25 separate nuns, out of a total of 228 visited; or, making allowance for deaths and renewals, of about 350 at most. This works out at rather more than 7 per cent.<sup>2</sup> It is true that the four outside nunneries were

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the following cases, where an abuse has been going on some time before it is discovered: p. 194, *duces*; p. 206, *Fornerius*; p. 207, *Aeliz*; p. 298, *Florenzia*; p. 334, *Hugo*; pp. 338-9, *Nicholaa...Eustachia...alias*; p. 385, *Roger de Sorant*; p. 397, *Thomas...multis annis*; p. 488, *Ricardus*. There are other indications that Prof. Jenkins is rash in assuming "little seems to have escaped his enquiry" (*l.c.* p. 105); see my Chapter XVII here below.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Jenkins (*l.c.* p. 103) counts only the twenty-five incontinent persons, and takes little account of the fact that several of the nuns were brought to bed again and again during Odo's visitations.

all exceptionally large and prosperous; but, even so, it seems probable that we must allow for the greater difficulty of finding evidence outside his own diocese, under the eye of an unwilling suffragan. Again, the proportion of peccancy in nuns is more than double that of the monks. It is obvious that a nun's lapse was far harder to conceal than a monk's; and this is brought out by a pathetic sentence which, though from a different age and country, must have been as true of thirteenth-century Normandy as of sixteenth-century Kent. We have the evidence, taken before Bishop Fisher's commissioners, of John James of Strode, literate, a freeman of some 57 years of age, servant to the prioress and convent of Lillechurch, who, having heard that the nun Elizabeth Penney was with child, "entered into the cloister of the said priory, where he found Dame Elizabeth sitting and weeping: to whom this present deponent said: 'Alas, madam, how happened this with you?' to whom she made answer: 'An I had been happy [*i.e.* lucky] I might have caused this thing to have been unknown and hidden'"<sup>1</sup>. The same may be noted in other visitation records; the better the bishop or other superior, the worse is the figure cut by his subjects in his register, though they were presumably better behaved, in fact, than those of less efficient bishops<sup>2</sup>.

Odo's financial statistics are no less significant. Twenty of the priories in his province were empty altogether, and nine of these were farmed out, in defiance of canon law, to laymen. Fifty-nine other priories averaged less than two monks each; so that there were seventy-nine houses in the province which could show an aggregate population of only 109. The debts, also, are almost as striking as the dilapidations. Besides the empty priories, there are forty for which Odo gives us no details, probably because he could get no trustworthy balance-sheet. This leaves 147 houses; in all likelihood, the 147 most prosperous. These had an aggregate income of nearly £108,000 *tournois*. Their aggregate debts were nearly £25,000, or very nearly one-quarter of their revenue. These Norman houses com-

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale-Caley, vol. iv, p. 380, note.

<sup>2</sup> Compare, for instance, Grandisson's register with those of his predecessor Stapledon and his successor Brantingham. Grandisson spent nearly all his time in his diocese; the others were royal clerks, and spent most of their time on the king's business.

plained of loss through war; and of course the Anglo-French wars for the possession of Normandy would account for a good deal. But it must be borne in mind that, in the days when monks were most numerous, wars were also very frequent in every part of Europe; the same civilization was favourable to both phenomena, and the social historian cannot altogether separate them. Moreover, apart from the constant corroboration which the chronicles of individual houses afford, other statistics from different parts fit in with these from Normandy. In 1292, the thirty-three Cluniac houses in the province of Poitou totalled only 187 inmates—an average of  $5\frac{2}{3}$  per monastery. Another series of Cluniac visitations extending from 1280 to 1353, if we take the highest figure ever given for each house, gives an average of  $9\frac{1}{3}$ ; if the lowest, not quite 7; it is probable that the average at any given moment was about 8. With regard to debts, the seven largest of the English Cluniac houses in 1262—before the Barons' Wars, be it noted—owed an average of £20 sterling *per monk*; in pre-war currency, about £400 per head. From the three thirteenth-century visitations of English Cluniacs which have come down to us we get the following result; 93 visitations, 583 monks visited, and £12,306 debt. This gives an average debt of £132 per house and £21 per monk; enormous figures for that time<sup>1</sup>. In 1290, the mother-house of Cluny owed, on her own account, £50,000 *tournois*, of which £42,000 had been lent to them at usury by a single firm of bankers. That these debts did not spring from the unbusiness-like habits of men who were too charitable to press their legal rights, is shown by abundant evidence from every time and country; there is a very illuminating article on this subject by

<sup>1</sup> These statistics may be verified from the documents published by S. Luce (*Bib. Éc. Chartes*, série IV, vol. v, pp. 237 ff.); A. Bruel, *Visites des monastères de l'Ordre de Cluny en Auvergne* (*ibid.* 1891, pp. 64 ff. and 1877, pp. 114 ff.; cf. his article on pp. 294 ff. of the vol. for 1873), and Sir G. F. Duckett, *Visitations of English Cluniac Foundations* (Kegan Paul, 1890). Bruel and Luce, who both point out that the Cluny visitations show a more favourable state of things than Odo's, have failed to notice how much of the Cluny evidence rests, confessedly, on mere hearsay from the interested parties; e.g. "domus est in bono statu spiritualiter et temporaliter, prout dicunt prior et monachi dicti loci" (Montbort). Duckett, in the introduction to his *Visitations and Chapters General of Cluny*, emphasizes the unfavourable character of the reports he publishes.

P. Viollet in the *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* for 1873, pp. 317 ff.<sup>1</sup>

NOTE TO CHAPTER XIV, p. 202

A little more has recently been written about Odo Rigaldi by Prof. Ch. Petit-Dutaillis in *Tout Essays*, pp. 105, 111. The author suggests with much probability that our future archbishop was among the commissioners whom St Louis sent round the provinces in 1247 to enquire into complaints against maladministration by royal officials.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Snape, p. 126. Many of the excuses which Prof. Jenkins brings for these debts amount in effect to this: that the monks lived from hand to mouth, at the mercy of any grave contingency, and that it is unreasonable to expect ordinary foresight here from holy men who showed keen business qualities in other directions.

## CHAPTER XVI

### VISITORS' METHODS

THIS earliest visitor's diary, then, is corroborated by a great deal more scattered evidence than I can adduce here. The first few pages at once suggest, and other thirteenth-century evidence confirms, the impression that what is called "monastic decay" set in very early<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, it had been very marked in much earlier centuries than this. Monks of the later Middle Ages, as we shall see, justified their laxity on the plea of immemorial prescription; those of the thirteenth century might have done the same. To go back still further, their predecessors at St Gall, in the eleventh century, were as naively indignant when Cluniac reformers were sent to bring them back to their Rule in weighty matters like flesh-eating, as any Norman monk could possibly have been at this upstart reforming friar. The capitularies of Charles the Great, with other documents of that period, show these abuses as ingrained already in the eighth and ninth centuries. They probably began almost before Benedict was cold in his grave. Doubtless there was always a small minority faithful to the Rule—a handful, even at the worst times—but these were only men with a real vocation, or inmates of quite exceptional houses where the majority were disciplined, and the minority had to follow. Later, we shall find the leaders of the Order frankly complaining that the pope is mistaken if he thinks that "men of our day" can be reduced to the Benedictine discipline of the past. But for the present, in the thirteenth century, we find simply the passive resistance of the rank and file, who go on stolidly by the broad road, and do not even trouble to read the decrees by which popes would fain recall them to the narrow path of monastic salvation. Yet herein lies the main difference; that the monk of 1500 flatly refused obedience, where the monk of 1200 had quietly declined it. It may be doubted whether the former was very much more

<sup>1</sup> See the visitation methods of St Udalric of Augsburg, quoted by Mabillon in *AA.SS.O.S.B.* v, 431.

undisciplined than the latter. Some real downward progress there does seem to have been, even in practice; but it is questionable whether the average of actual monastic practice, at the worst times, fell so far below average practice at the best times, as this latter fell below the requirements of the Rule, not interpreted with pedantic strictness, but in a reasonable way. The monachism of 1500 was condemned, not so much for its actual sins of omission and commission, as for its gradual loss of faith in its own professed ideal, a faithlessness bred from centuries of failure. Moreover, decay was not a positive process only; it was still more a relative process. Even though the monk had remained stationary, he would still have lost ground in comparison with a progressive society outside his walls. He himself, on the one hand, was deciding more and more definitely that life was impossible on the high Benedictine plane, that one time-honoured relaxation after another must be formally legalized, and that the world must be content to accept him frankly now at this lower valuation. On the other hand, the world began to ask more and more insistently whether a salt which had so far lost its savour was not ready for the dunghill. Public disillusionment on this score was as long and gradual a process as the growth of anti-Roman feeling in England; both began at least as early as the mid-thirteenth century.

For we may safely argue here from one country to another. The average of English church life was probably always above the general Continental average, but not above that of such a province as Normandy. The main conditions of monachism were so much the same everywhere, that the *onus probandi* rests upon those who would draw an important distinction between the two countries on any point. Moreover, the terms in which Matthew Paris records the papal commission for monastic reform throughout Canterbury province, under the year 1232, suggest that there was no less need for reform in England than in Normandy<sup>1</sup>. If a visitation-diary of Grosseteste had come down to us, it might very likely have outdone Odo's<sup>2</sup>. Again,

<sup>1</sup> See text in Appendix 34.

<sup>2</sup> Mr F. S. Stevenson (*Robert Grosseteste*, p. 147) is very misleading when he suggests that the two or three monastic scandals which are recorded in Grosseteste's letters represent an approximately exhaustive list. It is now admitted on all hands that the bishops enregistered only such documents

Salimbene knew both France and Italy well, and he tells us explicitly that the Rule was not so well kept in Italy as in France. In Germany and Spain, the visitations were never carried out with real regularity. All the evidence, therefore, suggests that Odo's monasteries were rather above the average of their time.

Moreover it is extremely instructive to compare him with other visitors; and, here, we are fortunate in possessing a sub-contemporary parallel from an equally, or almost equally, civilized district of France. The visitation-diary of Symon, archbishop of Bourges, shows how much more this prelate cared for the temporal than for the spiritual side of his office<sup>1</sup>. The formal tributes to his dignity and his rights are minutely recorded; due ringing of bells and procession to meet and acknowledge the visitor; due permission for him to sing Mass in the abbey church and convoke the brethren in chapter; above all, due payment of fees. The archbishop began his visitation at Angles, where still stands the ancestral castle of Sir Guichard d'Angle, Chaucer's colleague. Here it is recorded that "the Abbot came a league to meet us, and saluted us with a cheerful countenance. He provided for self and train most excellently and splendidly, with good bread, good wine, good meats in great variety, and all sorts of other necessities." Next day, however, Symon paid for all this good cheer, except the oats. Here he preached the crusade against the king of Aragon, and then visited the monastery, "inquiring diligently into their spiritual and temporal state... and by God's grace both spiritual and temporal matters were in a fit and most prosperous state." The next monastery, Mortemer, received him *processionaliter*, in full canonicals, with cross borne before him, to the responsory "*Deum Time*"; next day, however, there was a painful dispute with the monastery as to whether the archbishop's servants had paid properly. At Poitiers, the dean and chapter met them in due procession and

as were useful for future formulae, or such as were needed for future reference in important cases. Even Odo's diary, as we have seen, is not an exhaustive record; and the ordinary episcopal register does not record one-tenth of his visitatorial experiences. The Bardney case is in Grosseteste's letters because it scandalized all England, as Giraldus tells us; the Minting case, almost as gross, because Grosseteste needed to put on record the efforts which he had made to reform that priory.

<sup>1</sup> Printed in Baluze-Mansi, *Miscellanea*, vol. iv, pp. 205 ff. Symon reigned from 1281 to 1298.

with the usual formalities: "They gave his Grace rich and splendid hospitality. . . and presented many wines at the meats, at drinkings, and in small barrels, as the custom is." From this time forward, the spiritual business falls more and more into the background, and the whole picnic element becomes more and more prominent. At Obazine, the Cistercians were hospitable even to waste; the abbot paid two bushels of corn for young growing wheat "wherewith to strew my Lord's chamber and the hall wherein he ate." At Bordeaux, "many burgesses came after dinner to visit my Lord, with trumpets and in great solemnity and reverence; and they drank and ate comfits with him." At Bastide-Ste-Toy the prior and bailiff each gave him a barrel of wine. Here and there we get some hints of real visitation; at Cambronne, some monks of the abbey had given him to understand that the prior was wasting the revenues. The archbishop called them publicly into the chapter-house, where all swore to the contrary an oath: "with which answer he rested content." We get a similar case soon after: the Maimet monks slept and ate in their own private rooms; they promised amendment, and he inflicted no punishment. At St-Gervais "The Prior sent word to my Lord that they would gladly receive him, but by reason of the perilous roads (for there were robbers in all those mountain ways who laid wait daily for passers-by) he sent him for the present his visitation-fees." With this, again, it is evident that the archbishop rested content. At Fluvic, a cell to Conches, "The place was so ruinous that no man was there to pay their visitation-fees: wherefore my Lord laid the priory under an interdict." Six days afterwards, the clerk who held the priory to farm came and paid the fee of 12 *livres*; this, again, closed the incident. In the diocese of Clermont there were thirty-nine houses which he did not visit; but the fees were duly paid, except some cases where the monks were excused for their poverty's sake, and others where they were excused for favour of some great man; *e.g.* three were remitted "out of love for the Seneschal of Lyons, who had possession of them"<sup>1</sup>. There is less and less eccle-

<sup>1</sup> We see already in Odo's diary that a considerable percentage of small priories were deserted by the monks and farmed out. Here, the three were apparently farmed out to a layman, a practice explicitly forbidden in canon law.



siastical business as the report goes on; it was a valuable economic record for Symon and his successors, showing clearly what jurisdiction and fees he could claim, but there is no pretence of recording how far the generality of the houses kept their Rule or the papal statutes.

Symon, then, like the Worcester chapter, was mainly concerned with his own privileges and fees<sup>1</sup>. Another striking instance remains still in manuscript; a visitation of Worcester diocese by Archbishop Morton's commissaries in 1486. It is duly entered in his register, where it fills many pages of fine calligraphy; but, after the first few parishes, the scribe has often not troubled to put more than the name of the place visited. Morton did not wish to register the good or evil deeds of the Worcestershire clergy and their flocks, but simply to record the successful assertion, in 1486, of his legal rights over the diocese.

A word must be said here as to the forms and ceremonies of visitation. Several Visitors' manuals have survived, in print or in MS.; moreover, the reports themselves yield to the patient student a pretty clear idea of the procedure employed. By far the best and clearest account is Professor A. Hamilton Thompson's in his preface to vol. 7 of the Lincoln Record Society Publications: the reader will find there all that he is likely to want<sup>2</sup>.

The Visitors' manuals resemble each other so closely in all their main characteristics, that one may pass as a fair sample of the rest. Let us take, therefore, one of the latest available, as being more fully developed than some of the earlier examples. This is contained in the fifteenth-century customal of the Sisters of Syon, and is printed by Aungier on p. 276 of the Appendix

<sup>1</sup> See *Sede Vacante Register*, Worcs. Hist. Soc. 1893, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Equally emphatically, however, must he be warned against Dr Jessopp's account in his preface to the *Visitations of the Diocese of Norwich*, adopted by Cardinal Gasquet in his preface to *Collectanea Anglo-Premenstratensia*. Both editors have often misunderstood even the documents under their eyes, quite apart from all that can be gleaned from other sources; it is evident that here, as often elsewhere, Dr Jessopp gave the reins to his imagination; e.g. his description of the Norwich visit of 1526 (preface, pp. xix ff.) is at plain variance with his text, as a patient reader may verify for himself.

to his *History of Syon Monastery*. There are a few peculiarities due to the special constitution of this nunnery; these I have enclosed in square brackets, and I have modernized the fifteenth-century spelling.

*Of the Visitation of the Bishop*

The Bishop visiteth each three years if he will, such time as he visiteth his diocese. [But he shall never visit here but in his proper person, having with him two or three sad and honest persons. Of the which one shall be a religious man of the Order of Benet or Bernard, chosen by the Abbess and general Confessor, with the counsel of six the elder and saner of either party separately, of Sisters and Brethren, if they think it expedient<sup>1</sup>.] But no layman nor wedded man shall ever enter with the Bishop in his visitation, but if he be called by the said Sisters' and Brothers' consent together with the Bishop for some special cause which may not be discussed utterly without the counsel of such a man. When therefore the Bishop shall visit, he must send beforehand his letters of citation, as the manner and custom is; and when he cometh to visit he shall be received worshipfully with ringing of bells and procession. And when the orison is said over him at the high altar, the blessing given and the sermon ended, (if there be any,) he shall go to the Sisters' door by the guiding of the general confessor. Which door opened, the Abbess with the convent shall receive him reverently, going processionally before him without song or reading into the Chapterhouse; whom the Bishop with his clerks shall follow; and, when he cometh into the chapter, they shall kneel to him as he goeth before them; and, when he hath taken his seat, he shall make the Abbess to sit at his right hand and command all others to sit, his clerks sitting before him on a tapette [carpet]. This done, the Bishop shall say *Benedicite* and the convent shall answer *Dominus*. Then he shall publish the cause of his coming, as the custom is; and after that he shall propose unto them three things to be kept of all. *First*, that none depose to him, or to any that cometh with him, any thing that is corrected before and amended. *Second*, That none say any grievous thing of the Abbess or Confessor, Sister or Brother, whereof they have not been charitably warned before; nor that they depose aught or accuse any, but only of such things that have been done since the last

<sup>1</sup> Syon, being a Brigittine monastery, was double; the majority, and the ruling body, were nuns; a minority of brethren, separated by walls and gratings, ministered to their spiritual needs. The "sovereign" here referred to is the abbess; the "searchers" are the *circatores* of Benedictine life, seniors who saw to the discipline of the rest, as prefects assist in the discipline of public schools.

visitation. *Third*, that none, of wickedness or of evil will, defer anything which they know to be amended, and reserve it to the coming of the visitor, to the more slander of the doers; for all defaults are to be proclaimed and corrected in due time as they fall. Wherefore, they that do the contrary shall be grievously corrected by the Bishop, that all others be afraid to do so at any time. After this, the Bishop shall say in this wise to them: "We command you, in virtue of holy obedience, that ye tell us truth of all those things, that we have to examine and ask you of."

*These be the articles that the Bishop shall  
examine of in his visitation, if he will*

*First.* If the regular number of Sisters and Brethren be complete; and, if not, what is the cause thereof. 2. Also if divine service be duly done after the Religion and devoutly, and if the Sisters that be not sick hear daily their Mass. 3. If it be rung in due and competent time to the said service; and if all come thereto that may. 4. If there be had sufficient books to do divine service with. 5. If the church be served with lights and honest ornaments as the Religion will. 6. If the sacraments be duly and charitably administered to the sick and whole that devoutly ask them. 7. If the Sisters be communicated, as the Rule will and the constitutions of the Order. 8. If the year-day of the founders, and other dirges for Sisters and Brethren deceased, be duly observed when they fall. 9. If regular fasts and abstinences, silence, and other observances of the Order, be duly kept in times and places ordained thereto. 10. How Sisters be occupied when they be not at divine service nor at other conventual observances. 11. If there be any discord or controversy between the Sisters among themselves, [or else between the Sisters and Brethren]; and how and of whom it arose; and by whom it is nourished. 12. If any be diffamed of incontinence or of property, or of conspiracy against the Sovereigns or searchers, or against any Sister or Brother. 13. If any diffame others of the notable default that they cannot prove. 14. If any publication be made to any of the seculars of the privities of the Chapter or of the Monastery, and by whom. 15. If any be that have been in apostasy; and how they were received when they came again. 16. If there be a prison or prisons for such as deserve it. 17. If any detract the Abbess or Confessor, or any Sister or Brother, to any outward person. 18. If there be any inventory or register of the books of the library; and how they and other books of study be kept and repaired. 19. If the Chapter be duly held after the Rule and other times when need is; and regular corrections had therein. Or if any be found rebellious and disobedient to the Abbess or to the general confessor, or refuse to take corrections; and how such be

punished. 20. If the Abbess and Confessor and all other presidents and searchers treat religiously and charitably their Sisters and Brethren as they ought to do. 21. If the Abbess be defamed of any crime, or of dilapidation of the goods of the monastery, against the prohibition of the Pope in the xii article of the bull. 22. If the Abbess make alienation of immovable goods, or of any other things, against the Pope's prohibition. 23. If all regular clothing both for the bed and body, and all other necessities, be duly ministered by the Abbess or by her officers to the Brethren and Sisters after their need, as the Pope hath ordained. 24. If the Sisters and Brethren be served charitably and with a good will, in due and convenient times, of their necessities. 25. How the muniments of the monastery and the common seals be kept, and by whom? or if any sealing be made with any common seal without certain knowledge and assent of the convent or of the saner part of Sisters and Brethren, as the Pope hath ordained. 26. How the Infirmary is kept, and how the sick are treated, and if they are served competently without grudging. 27. If due distribution of the leavings and broken meat be made to the poor in due time. [28. If that, after sufficient endowment and building of the Church and monastery, the necessary expenses of the year present and of the year next to come reckoned, all that remaineth over be dealt every year to the poor, as the Rule will.]

The said examination made, the Bishop shall proceed to the act of visitation, after the power given to him by the Rule and by the Popes. And it is to be known that in three manner of ways he may proceed in his visitation. That is to say, by way of *accusation*, by way of *denunciation* and by way of *inquisition*. The *accuser* shall never be heard but if she first bind herself to the same pain, if she fail in her proof, that she whom she accuseth should have if she were found guilty. And these [following] are to be rejected and not to be admitted to accuse others: that is to say, stealers of holy Church goods, thieves, robbers, manslayers, forsworn, they that fall to incest, cursed, demented, mad, despisers of the Church, noised<sup>1</sup> of crime, out of faith and of good name and fame, enemies, schismatics, heretics, simoniacs, traitors, hurters of the king's coin, and such other.

Before *denunciation* there ought evermore to go charitable warning, for denunciation intendeth and worketh for correction; and therefore, if charitable admonition go not before, the denouncer is not to be heard, but to be repulsed; and they that be out of good name and fame and be enemies are also to be rejected from denunciation.

But as to *inquisition*, there ought to precede a common clamour of great misrule, not once but often, and this of good persons and sad, and then in such case he shall enquire of whom the said clamour and infamy sprang first.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e. diffamati*; see below, p. 238.

Nevertheless, if so be that it be answered of all to the Bishop that all things be well, he ought to joy thereof greatly and to thank God; and so to bless them all and go out as he came in. If their answer be otherwise, he shall proceed forth in his act of visitation, hearing attentively what is said to him or to any of his clerks.

*Of the Bishop's injunctions and corrections  
after his visitation*

And when all be heard that will come he shall show and publish such defaults as are to be corrected in such wise as to him seemeth best. But the corrections, penances and pains that are to be set and enjoined to the trespassers, he shall commit the execution thereof to the Abbess or to the sadder part of the Sisters, as the Pope hath ordained, which ordinances are to be read in all wise among the Sisters on the day before the Bishop's visitation, [as it standeth in the xi chapter of these Additions].

So then, all things rightly done after the rule, privileges and ordinances of the Pope, the Bishop shall enjoin the Abbess in the virtue of holy obedience that she have none of her Sisters in hate nor persecute them, nor the less charitably treat them, for anything they have deposed or said against her in the visitation. And also he shall enjoin the Sisters likewise, that they shall love the Abbess no less, nor withdraw from her due obedience and reverence in anything, and that no Sister reprove another or revenge herself upon another, or grieve or admonish another for anything that was said or deposed in the visitation. If any such matters be or fall that may not soon be determined or finished then, they shall be deferred and finished another time at the gratings without, or else within if the matter require it, so that the Bishop abide not at the monastery over three days.

By way of comparison, it seems worth while to print in Appendix 15 a translation of the earliest set of visitation-articles recorded for England; they were drawn up in 1259, and are recorded by the Burton annalist<sup>1</sup>. It is evident that Odo Rigaldi

<sup>1</sup> *Annales Monastici*, R.S. vol. 1, p. 484. The earliest articles of all, I believe, are those prepared for Cistercian visitors in 1134. I have given a fairly full list in E.H.R. Jan. 1914, p. 20, note 15. The earliest series of directions for visitors as to their farther form of procedure is in the Cistercian *Generalis Institutiones Capituli* (1240-56). Extracts from another set of about 1400 are printed in *Stud. und Mittheil. a. d. Bened- und Cistercienser-orden*, 1897, p. 97; the whole is printed by F. Winter in his appendix to *Die Cistercienser d. nordöstlichen Deutschlands* (vol. III, p. 197). Bishop Guillaume Durand, in 1271, incorporated a list in his *Speculum Iuris* (ed. 1692, vol. II, p. 34; lib. III, pt i, § 3). A very full *modus visitandi* was drawn up by the celebrated Abbot Trithemius, and is printed in his *Opp. Spiritualia et Moralia*, p. 995. A Cluniac questionnaire of 1417 A.D. is in Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* p. 129. No doubt many more might be quoted.

framed his own questions on the recent Gregorian statutes, which he has transcribed into his diary.

The Syon questionnaire touches upon certain legal technicalities which, if they had been better understood, would have prevented a good deal of random writing about visitatorial reports.

The visitors' methods were mainly *inquisitorial*, a form of procedure fully recognized in Roman law, and specially favoured by the Church even before the foundation of what we call, *par excellence*, the Inquisition<sup>1</sup>. This procedure did not, like modern English law, wait for an accuser before putting the suspected person upon his trial; the Church authorities, on their own initiative, might brand him as a "suspect" and call upon him to purge himself. It is, therefore, a fatal anachronism, however tempting, to treat *fama* and *communis fama* in medieval documents as the equivalent of the modern "common report," in the sense of "common gossip." *Fama*, or *communis fama*, was defined as "the general opinion of serious and well-informed neighbours"; medieval legists hesitated to lay down a hard-and-fast rule as to the exact number of witnesses necessary to constitute *communis fama*, but one weighty authority suggests that these should be six at least, and of good character. When *fama*, then, had marked a man as suspect of any offence, he was described in legal language as *infamatus* or *diffamatus* or *defamatus* of that offence, and could be called upon, not to come and stand his trial in the modern sense, but to come and prove his innocence; that is, formally, to purge himself before the constituted authority, and to secure a sentence of acquittal. Failing that, the *infamatus* was pronounced guilty, and punished accordingly. This may be illustrated by a brief quotation from the earliest existing English episcopal register—that of Hugh de Welles of Lincoln. About 1220 A.D., a priest was admitted to the living of Eastwell, "on condition that henceforth he will

<sup>1</sup> This is well explained in the article "Inquisition" in the 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. It may be verified in L. Tanon, *Tribunaux de l'Inquisition*, pp. 270 ff., 285 ff.; Pollock and Maitland, *Hist. of Eng. Law*, bk 1, ch. ix, § 4; *Summa Angelica*, s.v. *Infamia*, § 2, and *Fama*, § 4. But the conclusions thus plainly stated in the *Summa Angelica* and similar popular manuals of medieval Church law emerge almost as clearly from a careful perusal of the visitors' reports in our episcopal registers and other similar volumes.

not keep the concubine concerning whom he hath been *diffamatus* hitherto, nor any other." An equally plain example may be found in the case of Kirtlington vicarage, a few pages farther on<sup>1</sup>. This, then, explains the Syon phrases "noised of crime," and "common clamour, not once but often, and this of good persons and sad." If the Syon consuetudinary had been written in Latin, the first phrase would have run *diffamati de aliquo crimine*; and the second, simply *fama publica*, or *communis fama*, or *clamor publicus*. Nothing but extreme ignorance of visitatorial records can excuse the attempt to minimise the legal significance of these phrases. When once a bishop or a visitor had stigmatized a subject as *diffamatus*, or had directed his attention to the *communis fama* of his guilt and called upon him to purge that guilt, he stood in a position even more invidious than that of one against whom a modern coroner's jury has brought in the verdict of *guilty*. The phrase asserted strong presumptive evidence of guilt, and left him no escape but by legal proof of his innocence<sup>2</sup>. This legal proof was commonly by *purgatio* or *compurgatio*, to which I shall come more closely in a later chapter.

The visitor, then, had this inquisitorial procedure always at hand. Enquiry was his first duty, and, if he were energetic and thoroughly conscientious, enquiry article by article. It remains, therefore to consider the evidential value of the surviving records based upon these detailed enquiries.

<sup>1</sup> *Rot. Hug. Welles*, Cant. and York Soc. vol. i, pp. 97, 148.

<sup>2</sup> For farther evidence here, see Appendix 16.

## CHAPTER XVII

### EVIDENTIAL VALUES (1)

IF this discussion of the evidential value of our formal records runs to great length, let me plead that it is a fundamental question in monastic history. We have three main sources of information as to the monk's influence on society; his own words, the reports of his official visitors, and the judgements passed upon him by his contemporaries. The first and the third are comparatively simple; after making certain deductions which common sense and human nature will suggest to every thoughtful and unbiased reader, we may safely take the words at something near their face value. But the second is far more complicated; all the more, perhaps, because it has a deceptive appearance of solidity and finality. We may easily mistake both the quantity and the quality of these visitatorial records; both the proportion which those that survive bear to those that have perished, and the extent to which these survivors reveal the facts as they were. Let us here take those two points in their order. It has often been assumed that the documents are approximately exhaustive; the first, perhaps, who based his whole work on that foundation was the Jesuit agent, Dr Oliver, whose valuable *Monasticon Dioecesis Exoniensis* was vitiated by the assumption that the monastic offences recorded occasionally in episcopal registers were, approximately, the only cases known to the bishop. Although all the latest and ablest editors of visitatorial documents have realized the falsehood of this assumption, yet it is doubtful whether even they have not argued too freely *a silentio*; and certainly, on the other hand, the pictures of monastic life most widely read in Britain are still based upon Oliver's false assumptions, unqualified by any more recent scholarship.

Again, beyond this fragmentary nature of our surviving visitatorial records, there still lies the difficulty of gauging the visitor's personal equation, of realizing the conditions under which he worked, and of calculating the psychological and material forces arrayed against him. Sooner or later, someone



must seriously grapple with these fundamental problems, and the sooner the better. To emphasize their difficulty is only to say that the first attempt will be far from final, but that the final verdict will be hastened, if only a little, by every serious contribution.

Much has been done recently, directly or indirectly, in Professor A. Hamilton Thompson's *Lincoln Visitations*. Here the depositions of individual witnesses, with visitors' injunctions and other pertinent documents, are admirably translated and annotated; and those two volumes will do far more than anything else for the reader who can trust himself to learn history from the original records. The Camden Society *Visitations of the Diocese of Norwich* and *Collectanea Anglo-Premonstratensia* (3 vols.) would be almost equally instructive, but that the text is not translated in those editions, and the editors' introductions and summaries are untrustworthy<sup>1</sup>. This is the more regrettable, because few people find time to study these texts carefully for themselves; they suppose that they can trust whatever comes out with the *imprimatur* of the Royal Historical Society, and even so thorough a scholar as the late Dr James Gairdner found serious reason to regret that he had relied more upon the editors of those four volumes than upon the actual text. Unless, therefore, the reader is prepared to read the Latin first, and by that Latin to judge the value of the introductions and notes, he will do better to leave them alone<sup>2</sup>.

Nothing, then, can quite replace the study of actual texts, but something can be done to explain how we must work if we wish to get at the truths underlying those texts. There was once an idea that a great many of the episcopal injunctions and General Chapter statutes were "common form"; this assumption vitiates most of the earlier work in the *Victoria County Histories*, but in later volumes it has been happily abandoned. I had urged a series of reasons against it in *The English Historical Review* for January 1914; Professor Hamilton Thompson,

<sup>1</sup> A few of the almost incredible blunders and misrepresentations in the Premonstratensian volumes are exposed in the Appendix to *Medieval Studies*, 2nd ed. of 1st series. The Premonstratensian records themselves will be more fully discussed in vol. IV of this present work.

<sup>2</sup> I have translated fragments from the Norwich visitations in the 11th of *Medieval Studies*, and a great part of the visitation of Our Lady of Walsingham on p. 257 of *Social Life in Britain*.

writing independently at the same time, gave it the death-blow in his analysis of the Lincoln documents, and he again warns students against it in *The Cambridge Medieval History* (vol. v, p. 686). It seems always to have been a purely English legend, born and bred in slipshod antiquarianism. Continental students of all parties have seen clearly enough that these records are of first-rate significance under a crust of formal phraseology; a learned Benedictine like Dom Berlière insists that scholars will never really understand medieval monasticism until they have thoroughly exploited these visitatorial documents<sup>1</sup>.

How, then, did the visitatorial system work in practice? for thus alone shall we arrive at a true estimate of the value of visitatorial reports. It will be well to begin with four detailed judgements, out of many which might be quoted, from contemporaries who knew the actors well, and who describe the action from different standpoints.

Thomas Wright, on p. 184 of his *Poems attributed to Walter Mapes*, has printed a contemporary criticism of Cistercian visitations (which, of course, were the most efficient of all in that generation), by a satirist who has nothing to say against the system in itself, but points out how its excellent provisions were often nullified by human infirmity, and by abuses which, common enough in all times, were still more common at that rudimentary stage of civilization at which the judge who accepted no gifts from suitors was looked upon as a miracle of virtue. Our satirist describes how, when the notice of visitation came, the whole community laid themselves out to entertain the visiting abbot handsomely, first in one of the granges and then in the abbey infirmary, where the choicest fare might be enjoyed in a quiet way. The more superficial formalities of visitation were then punctiliously performed; but the visitor limited his questions to matters of money and secular business, without trespassing upon the thorny ground of morals.

If any man, zealous for the Order, speak up for the discipline thereof, then (unless he be one of great reputation) the father [visitor] biddeth him hold his peace. Hence it cometh to pass that many brethren conceal the corruption of evil-doing, seeing that there is no man of fervent spirit for governance.

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. bénéd.* 1897, pp. 370, 372.

On this incomplete and valueless evidence (writes the satirist), a formal report is drawn up; and the visitor then indulges in his periodical bleeding with its attendant *recreatio*, which means that "the law which he hath decreed against flesh-eating, he himself now destroyeth with his own sharp teeth and [greedy] belly." At the Last Judgement, our author opines, visitors will be painfully surprised to find that the enquiry is conducted in a more business-like fashion than anything they had been used to in this world.

Our next witness shall be the great Dominican master-general Humbert de Romans, who, writing two generations after Innocent III's attempt to regularize the visitation-system and to make all monasteries responsible to some central authority in their own Order, testifies both to the value of this effort, and to its very partial success<sup>1</sup>. Some Religious, he writes, possess no such central authority even yet; this is a monstrous folly—*mira fatuitas*:

There are others who do sometimes meet together in a Chapter, yet who do naught there but eat and drink more richly than usual, and make merry together, as if they were solemnly celebrating some feast; of which congregation it is written in Job xv. 34 (Vulg.) "the congregation of the hypocrite is barren." For the religion of hypocrites is barren, having nothing but a certain outward habit and appearance, so also these men in their congregations do no good, and therefore such a congregation is truly called barren. There are others who, in those same congregations, do some good in the matter of temporal profit, demanding account of the debts of their priories and so forth; yet they care little or naught for things spiritual. If any trifling possession is perishing, they debate diligently how it may be preserved; but if Religion perisheth they care not. If a tyrant steals the goods of the monastery, some device is soon ex-cogitated against him; but the devil steals the brethren's souls in divers monasteries, and no remedy is applied....Not so do holy men; these congregate together in the Lord's name in order to promote the Lord's business....But, albeit much good is done in those holy congregations, yet certain reprehensible things are wont sometimes to be done there; some pertaining to the whole congregation, others to the capitular body, others to the judges and presidents of the Chapter, and others to those of lesser rank. For it cometh sometimes to pass that, whereas these brethren meeting each other ought to hold holy colloquies, they pour themselves forth in tales

<sup>1</sup> *Bib. Max. Patrum*, vol. xxv, pp. 510 ff.

of worldly news, and trifles, and laughter and vain frivolities—*vanis dissolutionibus*—as St Bernard already noted.... Moreover it cometh sometimes to pass that such congregations fall into many excesses in the matter of food and drink and bedding, and many levities; in walking, in standing, in their habit and in other motions improper to the sanctity of such men. Hence many great folk, who are there assembled for edification's sake, are offended and scandalized, and the state of such Religious is evil spoken of.... Again, it cometh sometimes to pass that some, not walking in charity, strive to procure certain things in such Chapters for the confusion of others, or to take vengeance on them, or some other uncommendable deed.

He goes on to warn them against indiscretion, loss of temper, the pursuance of selfish aims, and the fault of Eli, whose neglect of proper punishment for past misdeeds allowed the evil to become irremediable. He illustrates this by an anecdote on a later page. A great lord wanted his brother elected to the abbacy of "a certain dissolute monastery"; his advocate committed the blunder of going to the monks and puffing the candidate for his sanctity and zeal for religion. The lord discovered this in time; he went personally and assured the monks that, although his brother, in different priories, had always fed and clothed his subordinates well, he had always been mild in the matter of punishments, "'and therefore do not be deceived in him. If that is the kind of abbot you want, that is how you will find him; but as to that great sanctity and religion of his, believe it not.' Thus he spake, and went forth from the chapter-house, and they forthwith chose this man"<sup>1</sup>. Passing on from the work of the General Chapters to that of individual visitors, Humbert writes:

Some visitors are sometimes such as to bring trouble into the monastery by their indiscreet words or deeds; and these trouble its peace.... Others are so timid that, for the sake of some men's peace, they let go the things which pertain to justice.... There is a third sort who exercise their duty so prudently and generously as to leave peace, and yet not to neglect justice, either in enquiring or in punishing or in commanding or in ordaining whatsoever is fit, or in like matters. Happy is such a visitor as this; for he is a true Solomon... and happy are they whom he visits, for they are not troubled at his visitation, but rather rejoice.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 514 b.

Humbert passes on to consider the inquisitional procedure against those who are accused or *infamati*.

There are some Superiors who, because of the burden and weariness involved in making enquiry, will never hear any evil of their subjects; nay, they are offended at all who speak evil of them. Wherefore it is told of a certain great prelate, who was slack in correction, that, when a certain monk came towards him who was accustomed to report the evil-doings of his subjects, he cried aloud and said [with the Psalmist]: "O God, make haste to help me!" . . . Others there are who, albeit they hear of their subjects' misdoings, and that often, yet seldom or never condescend to make enquiry. How marvellous—nay, how miserable! they are so careful of their worldly goods that, so soon as they hear of mismanagement on that score, they make enquiry, [as the lord of the unjust steward in Luke xvi]; but they seem to care naught for the soul's spiritual goods, if these are destroyed. . . . Others, again, though they take account sometimes, yet proceed so slenderly in the matter of enquiry that, in the face of any frivolous appeal, or trouble raised by some folk, or any cunning cloaking of wickedness, they are hindered from finding the truth concerning the transgressions reported—*de excessibus diffamatis*. . . . Note that there are some who are wont to grieve when the evil which is being sought is not found; and these are like unto the devil, who rejoiceth in iniquity. . . . Again, it cometh sometimes to pass that, if this enquiry be not well conducted, there remaineth ill blood between the *diffamantes* and the *diffamatus*, and between the witnesses and the man against whom they have testified, and between the adherents of different parties; nor does the enquirer take pains to pacify this quarrel, but leaves it behind him. . . . Note that, when enquiry has been made, and the crime defamed has been discovered, then some visitors punish too softly the faults that they have found; like a certain abbess of whom it is reported that, when one of her nuns was defamed before her of childbirth, she called her into the chapterhouse, and, having discovered her crime, made her prepare to receive discipline, and beat her in full chapter with a fox-tail<sup>1</sup>.

It will be seen that this great administrator, who had himself conducted and watched countless visitations, exposes the practical difficulties at least as frankly as the satirist. Moreover, all that he says here is essentially contained in one despairing sentence of his contemporary St Bonaventura, who writes concerning this same visitation-system, as applied to the parish

<sup>1</sup> *Bib. Max. Patrum*, pp. 542-54.

clergy, that the authorities, "given over to temporal cares, dissemble these [abuses], so that there is scarce any hope of correction"<sup>1</sup>. And the tale with which Humbert concludes has an almost exact parallel in one told by Sir Thomas More even under stress of his controversy against Tyndale<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, we cannot discount his evidence by pleading that, as a friar, he is here attacking only his rivals of the older Orders; for he spoke with equal plainness, though more briefly, to his own fellow-Dominicans. In his Circular Letter of 1261, addressed to all the brethren throughout the world, he wrote optimistically of the doings at the recent General Chapter; the Order was rapidly increasing; foreign missions were successful; heretics were being converted.

But, among these, there was one thing which grievously tarnished the splendour of all this rejoicing, and turned our budding consolation into mourning. For we found, by the manifold report of the brethren of four different provinces, that the corrections of visitors and provincial priors—nay, even of Provincial and even of General Chapters—are of so little avail in some cases, that among them almost everything remains uncorrected; and we find this unnatural thing, that those who, as God's falcons, ought easily to renew their old plumage for swifter flight after the prey of salvation, have in fact a skin that changes as little as the Ethiopian's. Hence, as is reported, there are many who have not yet abandoned pride in their buildings, ostentation in their garments, curiosity in their works, superfluity in their feasts, marks of suspicion in certain familiarities, discords in certain business with other folk, which do no little to scandalize the world<sup>3</sup>.

Another great Dominican of the thirteenth century was Étienne de Bourbon, mission-preacher and *malleus haereticorum*. After emphasizing the great incomes and social dignity of the prelates, which they ought to justify by hard and honest work, he adds:

Yet many of them care little to trouble themselves with the care of the souls and the churches from whence they draw this wealth.

<sup>1</sup> *Quare Fratres Minores praedicant*, § 13.

<sup>2</sup> *English Works*, 1557, p. 154 (properly p. 134); see Appendix 32.

<sup>3</sup> *Mon. O.P. Hist.* vol. v, p. 58; for *ancipites*, which makes no sense, I have ventured to read *accipites*. The *familiaritates* here alluded to, and in parallel Franciscan documents, refer to familiarities with women; see *Medieval Studies*, no. 9, pp. 17 ff.

When a certain great prelate had visited a parish under his subjection, and the priest in charge had prepared many rich things for him, both morning and night, by reason of his visitation, he concerned himself with no spiritual matters, and left nothing next morning but dung. That morning certain noble ladies came together to meet him; and, after Mass, which he desired to be said hurriedly and without music, a certain noble lady said unto him: "My lord, we are here come together to hear from you some word of salvation." Whereunto he made answer: "We do not meddle with those things." Then said she: "He had little thought for us who committed us to your care. Lo! after all your visitation ye leave nothing with us but the dung of your horses!"<sup>1</sup>

We may now turn to another Dominican of a century later, who had probably almost as much practical experience as Humbert, or, at any rate, almost as much first-hand acquaintance with the working of this system. John Bromyard enumerates in considerable detail the requisites for just and efficient visitation; but he interlards his text with frequent digressions to the effect that the things which he prescribes are too often neglected in the actual practice of his own day<sup>2</sup>. In earlier and better times, mutual accusations in chapter were frequent and welcome;

"but now, alas! those who strive for the correction of souls through accusations are counted by the evildoers not as spiritual folk, but as enemies and persecutors. . . . Thus, therefore, 'see the countries, for they are white already to harvest,' but alas! 'the harvest is great, but the labourers are few' who so proceed and work [as I have described]." For "Alas! it cometh frequently to pass. . . that, although prelates and other visitors hear many *corrigenda* and accusations, and, [for] correcting these things they need the counsel of wise men, yet the sinner will come, who knows that he is guilty and has been reported, but is also aware of the character and greed of the prelate or of his [evil] leader and counsellor; and, procuring a secret audience in his chamber, he will grease the palm of the prelate or his counsellor, unknown to all but God and the devil and the false prelate or counsellor and the wicked subject himself; and so he will change all that should have been done for his correction. And thus, afterwards, if any mention be made of this man's correction in the presence of

<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotes*, p. 428. Cf. also p. 403, where Bourbon tells a similar story from the lips of Humbert de Romans.

<sup>2</sup> *Sum. Pred. s.v. "Visitatio."* The references here are to §§ 14, 31, 42, 44, 45; cf. §§ 8, 34.

this prelate or his counsellor, forthwith they will answer and excuse the man, saying, 'Ah! by God, he is a good man; many lies fly abroad concerning good folk.' That is how he 'justifies the wicked for gifts' [Is. v, 25]."

In an earlier paragraph, Bromyard has put the same more briefly: "Thus the greed for gifts and filthy lucre frequently hinder the truth, lest it find vent in speech and deed and correction." Another frequent impediment is in the witness's fear of the transgressor's revenge; another is in the conspiracy of the guilty parties to hide things from the visitor.

These testimonies roughly cover the period with which this present volume is mainly concerned; the first dates from about 1200 and the last from nearly 1400. Let us now see how far these brief generalizations are borne out by detailed and concrete evidence from different parts of Europe. Here the unity of subject is more important than any unity of time, and therefore I pass on continuously to the end of the Middle Ages. A certain intensification of the visitor's difficulties will be traced as time goes on; but every one of those difficulties may be noted, and often in an acute form, from the very first.

The visitatorial system of the Cluniacs, Cistercians and Premonstratensians, with its farther extension under the friars and other later reformers, marked a great advance upon the earlier want of system; but a stream cannot rise above its source, and not even popes or saints could bring more than a partial order into the disorderly society of their day<sup>1</sup>. We must remember, again, the greater difficulty of travel<sup>2</sup>. Thirdly, there was the difficulty that many monasteries were exempt from ordinary visitation, and responsible only to the pope. In St Bernard's time, when this system was growing fast, yet had not attained to anything like its later proportions<sup>3</sup>, the saint condemned it

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. the case of the archbishop of Narbonne in Innocent III's register; also A. Jubion, *L'abbesse Marie de Bretagne, etc.* 1672, pp. 30, 37, 39; *Codex Dunensis*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, 1875, p. 421; F. Winter, *Cist.* vol. III, p. 323.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Epist. Cantuar.* R.S. p. 16; H. Pez, *Scriptt. Rer. Aust.* vol. II (1725), pp. 643 d, 645 b.

<sup>3</sup> It is true that Lérins boasted some such exemption from as early as about 455 A.D. (Giannone, *Regno di Napoli*, l. v, c. vi, § 2), but the first real case is Bobbio (628). Others followed at considerable intervals; the real multiplication only began with the rise of the Cluniac Order. See Appendix 18.



in very plain language to his former pupil, Eugenius III<sup>1</sup>. Two generations later, the archbishop of Canterbury sent an equally plain-spoken letter to Alexander III about the claim of Malmesbury to exemption; this

has destroyed the yoke of obedience, wherein was our one hope of salvation and the remedy for former transgressions. Abbots loathe to have a corrector of their excesses; they embrace the loose licence of impunity, and relax the yoke of claustral discipline to full freedom of desire. Hence it cometh to pass that the revenues of almost all the monasteries have been given up for a spoil and a prey. For the abbots, outside, pander to the cares of the flesh—*curam carnis in desideriis agunt*—caring for naught, so long as they are luxuriously maintained, and so long as there be peace in their own day; meanwhile the cloisterers, as folk without a head, spend their time in sloth and idle words, nor have they a president to bend them to the fruit of a better life: nay, if you heard their tumultuous contentions, you would think that the cloister differed little from the marketplace.

The very angels, continues the archbishop (or rather Peter of Blois, writing for him), do not claim this sort of exemption; "one of them did once wish to withdraw himself from God's power; and he was turned from an angel into a devil"<sup>2</sup>. Jocelin of Brakelond, though he himself was one of the beneficiaries, frankly confessed the dangers of indiscipline which exemption brought to his monastery of Bury<sup>3</sup>. Three other equally distinguished contemporaries wrote equally plainly on this subject for the public; Stephen, bishop of Tournai<sup>4</sup>, Petrus Cantor of Paris and Giraldus Cambrensis, who did Petrus the honour of stealing his very words<sup>5</sup>. Two generations after this, Cardinal Hugues de St-Cher stigmatized this among the crying evils of his time<sup>6</sup>; yet it rather increased than decreased; and to Thomas Gascoigne, on the verge of the Reformation, this was one of the main evils that must be remedied if the Church was ever to be purged<sup>7</sup>. But this system of exemptions was bound up with too many vested interests to be easily attacked; and we

<sup>1</sup> *De Consid.* l. III, c. iv, §§ 14, 16: compare E. Vacandard, *Vie de St-B.* 2nd ed. vol. II, pp. 474-5, and G. Schreiber, *Kurie und Kloster*, vol. I, pp. 87-91.

<sup>2</sup> *Pet. Bles. Ep.* 68.

<sup>3</sup> *Chron. C.S.* p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *P.L.* vol. 211, *ep.* 211.

<sup>5</sup> *Gir. Camb. Opp. R.S.* vol. IV, pp. 60 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Vol. IV, col. 284, 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Lib. Ver.* pp. 129, 203.

can trace no abatement, but rather the reverse, even after the direct onslaught upon it by so distinguished a prelate as Grosseteste at the reforming Council of Lyons in 1245<sup>1</sup>. Grosseteste complained that these exemptions were destructive of discipline, "especially in England." He then proceeded:

For, even though exempt [Religious] fornicate, even outside the precincts of their monasteries, or commit adultery or any other enormous and diabolical offences, the bishops or other pastors can do nothing against the devils which wholly possess such folk, or against their spiritual sicknesses; but the shepherds see their sheep strangled by such ravening wolves, yet their mouths are so closed by the privileges of these exempt Religious that they may not even cry a little aloud to save them.

Indeed, even where there is no previous exemption (continues Grosseteste), the sinner appeals at once to the archbishop or to the pope<sup>2</sup>. We may illustrate this pessimistic generalization by a concrete case. In 1345, the bishop of Norwich undertook to enquire into the state of the great monastery of Bury St Edmunds. The monks' claim to exemption forbade his visiting Bury personally and directly; he could therefore only appoint a commission of his diocesan clergy to sit at Ipswich and enquire into the reports which had been brought to him. The terms of reference to his commission ran<sup>3</sup>:

The enormity of the execrable and notorious crimes committed by certain monks of the Benedictine monastery of St Edmunds in this diocese, and by their companions<sup>4</sup> (who, not content with perpetrating such things within the precincts of the said abbey and of the places which they claim to be exempt from ordinary jurisdiction, do not shrink from doing the same, boldly, wickedly and publicly, in various places away from the abbey and town of St Edmunds<sup>5</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> "Nowadays," writes St Antonino in the fifteenth century—"modernis temporibus—almost all Religious are exempt from the jurisdiction of the Ordinaries" (*Summa*, vol. III, col. 920 b). But, however true it might be in Italy, things were never quite so bad as this in England.

<sup>2</sup> E. Brown, *Fascic.* vol. II, p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey*, R.S. vol. III, 1896, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> Or possibly "servants"—*familiares*. Hüfner (p. 57, note 6) quotes a decree of Alexander IV in 1256 against "Templars and Hospitallers, and other Religious enjoying the privilege of exemption," who defend their serfs and tenants against the ordinary courts "for thefts, adulteries and other crimes."

<sup>5</sup> The townsmen's revolt of 1326 had surprised 32 monks (out of a total of 80 at most) outside the abbey precincts "for recreation's sake."

which are notoriously not exempt but subject to the bishop's ordinary jurisdiction), provoketh the minds of the hearers to amazement, and doth rightly fill the Bishop's mind with extreme bitterness. And, although he is justly provoked whensoever he heareth any evil report of any churchmen whatsoever, yet is he more bitterly grieved with such as are taken into Religion in any monastery, since these do doubtless give an example of sin which doth encourage others, whereby his flock is infected. A clamorous report hath reached his ears, borne by public renown, that very many monks of the said abbey, in the manors of Barton, Horningsheath, Chevington, Westley, Rougham and Wirlingworth, and very many other places of his diocese, notoriously not exempt from his jurisdiction, keep women, even publicly, in adulterous, unchaste and incestuous embraces<sup>1</sup>, by which women they have notoriously very many witnesses [to their sin] walking upon earth<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, leaving their own habit in these places, they take the habit of layfolk, and, bearing arms of offence, they join promiscuously, day and night, in the fellowship of public malefactors, in rape of women, seduction of maidens, highway ambushes, simoniacal, usurious and other unlawful contracts, not without perjury, and other execrable crimes, which they commit publicly everywhere, to the scandal of the clergy, the disgrace of Religion, with execrable examples to others and the grievous peril of their own souls. Nay, and brother William of Burnham, Abbot of the said monastery, knowing that these things are notoriously committed by such men, whereof some are and have been his constant companions, even in the manors of Chevington, Redgrave, Cockfield, Melford and Tivetshall, wherein he hath sojourned at divers times, careth not to restrain their deeds but hath wittingly upheld them in the said horrible sins and evil-doings, and doth still uphold and foster them, wickedly giving the consent of his authority, which is more damnable than the deed itself, besides his own proper deeds, whereof we say nothing here, for reverence of his dignity, but which we purpose to unfold to him personally and secretly. Lest, therefore, the foul contagion of these monks aforesaid should infect the Bishop's flock, and their blood be required of his hands at the Last Day, he hath committed unto us his powers for the correction, punishment and reformation of the aforesaid offences, etc., etc.

The monk of St Benet's, who transcribes this document, asserts that it mendaciously suggests "many falsities and enormities inspired by hatred"; but the monks of Bury and St Benet's

<sup>1</sup> For a priest with cure of souls to sin with one of his parishioners was counted in canon law as spiritual incest.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Redman uses a similar phrase for the monks' bastards, *testes super terram* (*Collect. Anglo-Prem.* vol. II, pp. 66, 97, 121, etc.).

were closely confederate, and it is very improbable that an able and effective prelate like Bateman should not have made fairly sure of his ground before making such accusations and appealing to public notoriety in their support, even in a quarrel which had begun on the question of Bury's exemption from a tax sanctioned by the pope himself. The rest of the story may be read in the running summary to the volume, and on pp. xv ff. of the Preface; the abbot appealed to the pope, and Bateman lost his case. The Bury chronicler exults over Bateman's death at the Roman court, and asserts that his last words were "Buri, Buri, Seynt Edmond, Seynt Edmond!" (*l.c.* p. 326). But in 1414 the petition of the University of Oxford to Henry V, though strongly anti-Lollard in tone, contains the following plea for reform:

Seeing that exempt Religious, at the devil's instigation, are frequently polluted with carnal vices, and are not punished by their own superiors, but their sins remain unpunished, therefore it seems expedient to pass a statute to the effect that the ordinaries of the places [concerned] should have full power to punish and reform all Religious, and especially for the crime of fornication committed outside their cloisters<sup>1</sup>.

Almost at the same time, similar complaints as to the evil effects of the system were made at the Council of Constance<sup>2</sup>. Nothing effective was done; and, in seventeenth-century France, we find the virtuous bishop Fléchier still complaining of "le libertinage des monastères déréglés et des religieux qui se prétendent exempts de la juridiction épiscopale"<sup>3</sup>.

The next difficulty was economic. It was necessary to provide for the visitors' expenses; it was just, again, that these should be defrayed by the visitands; but here was a door opened for extortion on one side and default on the other<sup>4</sup>. Nor were such quarrels the worst results; we have overwhelming evidence for frequent bribery and guilty connivance. Some we have seen already. St Bernard had already complained: "They demand

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. III, p. 363, § 23.

<sup>2</sup> v. d. Hardt, vol. I, pars viii, p. 426; pars x, p. 620; Finke, p. 135, § 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Grands Jours d'Auvergne*, 1856, p. 85; cf. Martène, *Voy. Lit.* 1714, tom. II, pp. 219, 230.

<sup>4</sup> For visitation expenses see Snape, pp. 97 ff.; other instances in *V.C.H. Essex*, vol. II, p. 152; *Moore's Journal* (Worcs. H. Soc.), ff. 4 b, 5 a; Imbart de la Tour, vol. II, p. 495. I give farther evidence in Appendix 19.

the price of sins, without spending due care upon the sinners; which of all these superiors—*praepositorum*—will you find me who is not more watchful to empty the purses of his subjects than to uproot their vices?" Again, concerning a particular papal legate, he wrote to the pope: "Many bought themselves off from his visitation; when he could not come himself to any, he demanded and extorted from them through his messengers"<sup>1</sup>. St Hugh of Lincoln did all he could to break the nexus between visitation and money in the case of his archdeacons:

When they contradicted him with the frequent assertion that the wicked were more fearful of money loss than of the stigma of excommunication or even the affliction of bodily penalties, he, on the other hand, argued that this was to be ascribed to their own negligence, since they were more remiss in rebuking sinners and laying them under strict coercion, and they were less careful to ensure that the sinners should perform the satisfaction enjoined upon them, than that they should pay the promised money-fine<sup>2</sup>.

Grosseteste, again, spoke as plainly to the pope as St Bernard had spoken; the visitors are tempted to become "farmers of sins"<sup>3</sup>. Cardinal Hugues de St-Cher wrote, a few years afterwards:

"But nowadays these [Religious] are in sad need of the visitation of correction, as in Ps. 88 [33]: 'I will visit their iniquities with a rod, and their sins with stripes.' But alas! these men's visitors visit them not with a rod to correct, but with a tongue for eating; for they come only to eat." Therefore, he says, these neglected Religious "suffer from fleshly vices, which is a human failing, but grievous... they are like unto whited sepulchres, which within are full of all filthiness"<sup>4</sup>.

Just about this very time, we have seen how Archbishop Symon of Bourges noted more about meat and drink than about other business, at some of the places which he visited<sup>5</sup>. A little later,

<sup>1</sup> *Serm. in Cant.* LXXVII, § 1; *Ep.* CCXC. St Bernardino of Siena echoed this same accusation (*Opp.* vol. v, p. 14 b; cf. vol. I, p. 170 b), where he treats the illicit gains of visitors as a notorious abuse. Meffret, again, applies St Bernard's words to fifteenth-century Saxony (*Temp.* p. 453 m).

<sup>2</sup> *Magna Vita*, R.S. p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> Wharton, *Ang. Sac.* vol. II, p. 347; see Snape, *l.c.* p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. IV, p. 204, 1. Though Hugues was a French Dominican, yet of his 500 Dominican collaborators on the great biblical *Concordance* the majority were English.

<sup>5</sup> Baluze-Mansi, *Misc.* bk IV, pp. 216-17.

Durandus, in his memorial to the Council of Vienne (1311) speaks of the "negligence of correction" consequent upon the habit of punishing by money-fines<sup>1</sup>. Ruysbroeck, not two generations later, wrote:

But now is the contrary [of the early pure Church]. If a bishop or a great abbot will visit his flock, he rides with forty horses and a great train and great cost, for it is not he who pays. His corrections touch men's purses, he cares no more for men's souls. Great minstrelsy, great feasts, great expense in food and drink, or great golden brooches must be given; and when they have gotten this, the correction and the chapter are finished; for this is all they seek. Whether they be canons or nuns or monks that are subject to them, these must pay, for I know not whereon these gifts are grounded save on custom, but the bishop is glad to get. Yet in this way sins are not diminished, they are rather increased<sup>2</sup>.

About the same time, John Gower puts it epigrammatically; "the prostitute is more profitable [to our prelates] than the nun"<sup>3</sup>. The University of Paris, in its pleas for Church reform at the coming Council (1411), urged: "*Item*, let it be proposed that visitations be performed by the prelates diligently and profitably, rather for [the good] of souls than for the extortion of money"; again: "Let the prelates be persuaded not to dissemble, and altogether neglect the correction of, the sins of their flocks, tolerating them in consideration of the money they receive"<sup>4</sup>. Thomas Gascoigne, in whose earlier lifetime this memorial was drawn up, brings a solemn accusation of this kind against his contemporary bishop, De la Bere of St David's. The clergy of this diocese, he says, repented of their state of concubinage and besought him to strengthen their hands, and enforce the law of expulsion,

that by your authority they may thus be parted from us and from our houses, and we may never have the occasion of sinning with them, nor these concubines the occasion of sinning with us in cohabitation. And this bishop of abominable memory made answer: "I will not grant that your concubines depart either from your houses or

<sup>1</sup> Pars III, tit. 49, p. 332.

<sup>2</sup> *Werken*, vol. II, p. 180; ed. Surius, 1692, p. 149. Thus (he adds) the bishop gets the money, fools get a momentary pleasure, and the devil gets the souls: see Appendix 36.

<sup>3</sup> *Mirour*, l. 20, 149; *Vox Clam.* vol. III, pp. 189 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Finke, pp. 132, 138; cf. p. 144.

from you, nor be compelled thus to depart; for then I, your bishop, should lose the four hundred marks which I receive yearly in my diocese for the priests' concubines"<sup>1</sup>.

In 1496, we find the prior of St-Euverte writing: "...when [conventual authorities] are accused of maladministration, the Order sends down visitors who are received sumptuously and richly entertained. The neighbours and the great folk are invited to banquet with these commissioners, who are bribed to silence with gifts of money"<sup>2</sup>. The Dominican Pépin, in about 1524, asks:

But what do the bishops of our day—*moderni episcopi*? Certainly they commit to their vicars and officials the care of visiting the abbeys and priories under their jurisdiction; and these men, having visited the said houses in a very superficial and hurried fashion, when an excellent dinner has been provided and the usual money fees have been received, say farewell until next year. Therefore they enquire not as to the life and morals of the monks—whether they live in common without private property, in chastity and modesty, performing their church services, and so forth. Wherefore the monks sin the more securely and boldly; and thus they go down to hell, together with those who should have visited them<sup>3</sup>.

In a later sermon, Pépin speaks of the peculation and robbery of the poor which went on in religious hospitals, where the patients went starving or begging while the officials lived in superfluity. "Wherefore Pope Clement V commanded all diocesans to correct and effectually amend these things, in the decree which I have quoted above. But, alas! no worthy correction is made of these things; because they are wont to appease the diocesans' officials with gifts when they come to them for visitation"<sup>4</sup>. And, as this passage implies, we may find strong confirmation of these criticisms in successive papal decretals. Innocent III had already fulminated against the abuse in the great Lateran Council (c. 33). A generation later, we find Innocent IV violently emphatic; if any visitor accept money

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Ver.* p. 35. We must make allowance for this Oxford Chancellor's rhetorical forms; but the widespread frequency of this *cullagium*, or tribute from concubinary clergy, is established by such multiple quotations as may be found in Dr Lea's book and by many more which might be added.

<sup>2</sup> Imbart de la Tour, vol. II, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> *Ninive*, serm. XIX, f. 134 c.

<sup>4</sup> *Sermones Dominicales*, 1 post Trin. serm. 2 de evangel. (ed. 1545, f. 16 b, c).

or gifts, "let him be accursed, nor receive absolution unless he restore it twofold." Gregory X, another generation later, considering that "many are reported to be temerarily transgressing" this decree, felt it necessary "to fortify it by the addition of a penalty." It is no longer left to the culprit to choose for himself between this twofold restitution and the Church's curse; there is now no alternative, and the bribe is to be restored twofold "within a month" from its reception. A generation later again, Boniface VIII allows the reception of money, in moderation, as an alternative to the hospitality which the monks were bound to offer to their visitor<sup>1</sup>. It is fairly evident that here, as in so many other cases, the total prohibition has been found impossible; the only struggle now is to regulate that which cannot be prevented; and it is easy to understand how this allowance enabled unscrupulous visitors to behave in the manner which contemporary evidence depicts.

Again, we have already seen complaints of the frequent neglect to perform even the most perfunctory visitations<sup>2</sup>. Giraldus Cambrensis writes of the crying need for some regularity of visitation<sup>3</sup>. Perhaps in that very same year, 1198, Innocent III noted the complete neglect of visitation in the diocese of Poitiers, under an absentee bishop<sup>4</sup>. It was this kind of experience, no doubt, which led him to aim, in his Lateran Council, at a system by which the Benedictines and Augustinians should have their own regular visitors, even when the bishops failed. Yet, many years after that Council, Grosseteste found himself obliged to meet the objection that the bishop's right of visitation had sometimes lapsed by custom, in virtue of long disuse<sup>5</sup>. Again, in 1281, we find Archbishop Peckham writing very plainly to the bishop of London: you would do better (he says) to correct the delinquents of your own diocese than to resist your primate

<sup>1</sup> *Sext. Dec.* l. III, tit. xx, cc. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 20. Odo Rigaldi himself, with all his energy, did not always visit dependent cells; see the case of Saana on p. 401 of his diary. The Norwich visitations show that the important cells of Yarmouth, Lynn and Aldby were judged simply from reports gathered at the parent house of Norwich. Farther evidence in Appendix 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Opp.* R.S. vol. II, p. 93.

<sup>4</sup> *Regest.* lib. I, ep. 483; P.L. vol. 215, col. 449.

<sup>5</sup> *Epp.* R.S. p. 421; he is speaking immediately of the cathedral chapter of Lincoln, but not excluding the monks.



in his exercise of his rights of visitation<sup>1</sup>. Even with the saintly Thomas Cantilupe of Hereford Pecham had equal difficulties; Odo Rigaldi was similarly resisted by his suffragans, and the phenomenon is almost too common to be noted. At this same time, Hugues de St-Cher was writing: "The clergy have no correctors"<sup>2</sup>. Here he is speaking of the secular clergy; but the theory of visitation was no less strict for these seculars than for the regulars; indeed it was more strict, since very few seculars were "exempt," as many thousands of regulars were. The legist John of Ayton, writing shortly before the Black Death and commenting on that provision in the decrees of the legate Othobon, and the decretals of Gregory IX and Clement V that regular triennial General Chapters should be held for monastic discipline, notes that "in these parts it is not kept, because it is not decreed who should execute it"<sup>3</sup>.

The neglect of visitation in France during the Hundred Years' War was naturally terrible<sup>4</sup>. The memorials to the Councils of Lyons (1274), Vienne (1311) and Constance (1411) all refer to the neglect of visitation<sup>5</sup>. Some priories, says Durandus, are never visited at all, and the monastic Order in general is almost in ruins—*pene lapsus*<sup>6</sup>. It is one of Gascoigne's main complaints that the bishops, often absent from their dioceses, let discipline go to ruin<sup>7</sup>. Cusanus, about the same time, feels that the root of misgovernment lies in papal absolutism; if all the papal legates, who know something of local conditions, formed an advisory council in Rome and kept the pope informed, then the Church might be reformed; the present want of system is simply absurd<sup>8</sup>. Tritheim, speaking in 1493 to the assembled abbots of a reformed congregation, said: "The regularity [of General Chapters] is the one fortress of our Order, without

<sup>1</sup> *Epp.* R.S. p. 174. Among many similar instances cf. pp. 889-92. A very interesting story of the kind has just been published for Durham in 1300 (*Camden Miscellany*, xiii); but here religious and political reasons are intermingled.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. iv, f. 184, 3.

<sup>3</sup> p. 144. *In hac parte* might conceivably mean "in this matter," but the whole context seems to justify my translation in the text; yet England was the most regular of all great countries.

<sup>4</sup> H. Denifle, *Désolation*, etc. vol. i, p. 568; cf. pp. 151, 153, 314, 415.

<sup>5</sup> Labbe-Mansi, *Concilia*, vol. xxiv, c. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Durandus, pars iii, tit. 49, p. 332; Finke, p. 132, § 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Lib. Ver.* pp. 43, 65; cf. pp. 32-6.

<sup>8</sup> *Opp.* p. 742.

which our whole Religion would be brought to confusion, as may clearly be seen in those who have celebrated no Chapters for many years past"<sup>1</sup>. In that same year the abbot of Cîteaux reported to the great assembly of Tours that the visitation-system had long fallen into disuse in his Order<sup>2</sup>. The abbot of Cluny had reported exactly the same of his own Order in 1417: "the superiors had formerly visited to the correction of excesses and the reformation of morals," but now, by reason of wars and convulsions, the Order "is almost ruined morally"—*nunc fere colapsus [sic] est in moribus*<sup>3</sup>. In the archbishopric of Cologne, one of the most civilized in Europe, the archdeacons had altogether ceased to visit in the last generations of the Middle Ages; they took their visitation-money from the clergy but never came near the churches; and the priests, glad to escape too close supervision, cheerfully paid this tax, although canon law expressly forbade the exaction of fees for visits not actually performed<sup>4</sup>. The orthodox German clergy who memorialized the Council of Trent, through the Emperor Ferdinand, in 1562, complained that there were dioceses in which neither visitations nor synods had been held "for sixty years past"<sup>5</sup>. Prelates, (writes Pépin in 1524), "seldom or never visit... Even though [the monasteries] may be visited yearly, yet this is not by their proper ordinaries but by commissaries, who commonly seek the gain not of souls but of temporal things, even though this be forbidden [in canon law]." They visit through suffragans and vicars: "therefore they shall go to heaven through vicars"; "I would not like to die in their skins"<sup>6</sup>. About the same time, the Englishman Christopher St Germain specifies, among good old laws now abrogated by neglect, "that the bishop shall every

<sup>1</sup> *Dehort.* p. 264 (*De Ruina*, c. x).

<sup>2</sup> *Analecta Gallicana*, vol. II, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> Duckett, *Visitations*, etc. p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> Löhr, pp. 237-8, 271, 277. "For the whole of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century, so far as the account-books extend, they show not a single visitation of the archdeacon's vicar-general within the archdeaconry of Xanten. The archdeacons themselves were almost always absent; still less can they ever have visited their parishes in those days." Again, "The archdeacons and their commissaries had lost all influence over men's minds; they had not the least power of controlling the movement" [of Reformation].

<sup>5</sup> Schelhorn, vol. I, p. 565; cf. pp. 527, 566.

<sup>6</sup> *Ninive*, serm. XIX, f. 134 c; *Sermones*, 182 a, 254 c.

year go about his diocese with great diligence and effect"<sup>1</sup>. Sir Thomas More, in the heat of his controversy with St Germain, admits that there is some real neglect of visitation<sup>2</sup>. And, to close this part of the subject, we have evidence not only for general faults of omission but, though of course much more rarely, for sins of commission. Giraldus Cambrensis speaks plainly of the temptations besetting nunnery-visitors; he quotes the case of Helias in *Paradisus Patrum*, and the dangers of the dual Order of Sempringham, and finally the case of "Abbot Enatus, who, in our own day, similarly assembled virgins in the obedience of Christ, and finally, succumbing to temptation, got several there with child"<sup>3</sup>. Cardinal Hugues de St-Cher writes:

The lives of prelates ought to be an example, and as it were a book for their flocks; even as Jacob set peeled wands before his sheep that they might conceive ring-straked lambs. But note that, whereas a certain woman was accused for having brought forth an Æthiop child, and excused herself by pleading the painted image of an Æthiop which she had before her eyes when she had conceived, so likewise have the flocks of our day no example set before them but Æthiop images of prelates<sup>4</sup>.

Gower heads one of his chapters: "This deals with the way in which Ordinaries, by their visitations wherein they say that they correct veiled nuns, oftentimes make them worse." In the chapter itself, he enters into details which leave no doubt as to his meaning. Bishop Henry of Liège, in the thirteenth century, lived in this fashion for thirty years, with two or three abbesses and a nun among his concubines<sup>5</sup>. And Gascoigne writes:

In my own days, in the year 1443, there was elected, or rather intruded, an archbishop begotten in open adultery; and, being such, he begat sons and daughters upon a nun when he was of episcopal

<sup>1</sup> *A Treatise concernynge the division between the Spiritualltie and the Commonaltie*, f. 7 a.

<sup>2</sup> *English Works*, p. 870 c.

<sup>3</sup> *Opp.* R.S. vol. II, pp. 245-8. On p. 344 he quotes a bishop of his day who "used to say, assertively, that mere fornication was no sin." On pp. 294 ff. he recurs to the subject again; he knows of a bishop who rewarded a mother's shame by giving the son a canonry; he knows of boys put into canonries for more shameful reasons still (p. 295).

<sup>4</sup> *Opp.* vol. VII, f. 101, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Ecc.* an. 1273-4; for other references see *From St Francis to Dante*, 2nd ed. p. 393, n. 12, and compare Gess, p. 43.

rank and before he was archbishop; and yet he was called "chosen of the Holy Ghost"; although the pope said he was not willingly chosen; yet the pope provided him [with the archbishopric]<sup>1</sup>.

Pecham, writing in 1279, describes an episcopal sinner of his own day who seems to have deserved a place by this man's side<sup>2</sup>, yet a comparison of dates seems to show that no bishop was deposed or forced to resign at that time. More cases of this kind might be quoted in corroboration of the frequent complaints, in all countries, that too many prelates were precluded by their own sins from all effectual correction of their flocks. The Carthusian Dorlandus quotes the case of a fifteenth-century bishop of Liège who was "a seducer of maidens and of nuns," and whom a pious soul saw expiating his sins by appropriate pains in hell<sup>3</sup>. Trithem was abbot in perhaps the most efficiently reformed congregation of his time; yet he appeals to his fellow-abbots to testify to the rarity of trustworthy visitors:

I am a liar, or the contumacious are often rebuked by contumacious [visitors], the foul are accused by the foul, who thereby thinks to have escaped from his accomplice, as though it were not enough to have consented with him.... They condemn outwardly that which they do in secret... often the avaricious rebukes the covetous, the lecher rebukes the immodest.... What think ye, Fathers, can deceivers of this sort be found among the visitors themselves? I dare not say; yet I know by experience. Many say many things; few show forth what they say in deed; they avail not to reform themselves and their own, and they strive to compel others to observance<sup>4</sup>.

In an earlier chapter, he has said: "I am ashamed to relate that which many abbots are not ashamed to do; men who are drowned in (or rather maddened by) the delights of the flesh, and keep nothing of monastic decency, and leave nothing of worldly turpitude undone" (*ibid.* c. VIII, p. 261). And, again, to the unworthy abbots: "Ye who should correct the monks' lives commit iniquities; and, lest your own be rebuked, ye wink at other men's" (*ibid.* c. XI, p. 269). And in another place he

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Ver.* p. 231. Rogers notes that this was John Stafford, dean of Wells, 1423-5, and bishop, 1425-43; he died in 1452.

<sup>2</sup> *Epp. R.S.* p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Chron. Cart.* p. 420.

<sup>4</sup> *Dehort.* p. 271 (*De Stat. et Ruina*, c. XII). Compare his report of the General Chapter acts of 1426; let visitors begin by reforming themselves, lest the visitands retort: "Physician, cure thyself" (*Opp. Pia*, p. 1041).

shows how emphatically earlier disciplinarians have supported him here. In his analysis of the existing papal and provincial statutes, he reports a decree under the year 1456:

Seeing that the sight of women is a contagious thing to spiritual men, therefore let him to whom the care of souls is committed beware lest he ever undertake a visitation of nuns from desire of beholding them, and not for the cause of bare necessity; and, when he has done his work, let him depart with the utmost haste. Nor let him presume to enter the enclosed portions of the nunnery, unless some great necessity or profit demand this<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Opp. Pia*, p. 1051 (1456 A.D.).

## CHAPTER XVIII

### EVIDENTIAL VALUES (2)

LET us pass on from these notes of insufficient visitation in act, to mark the no less striking insufficiency of the written documents in which those acts were recorded. Nothing is more remarkable than the extreme, though of course natural, fear of scandal which frequently transpires from those documents. Not only are ordinary prelates ready to gloss things over so long as scandal can be avoided, but sometimes even the sternest visitors. Readers of Jocelin of Brakelond will remember the chronicler's allusion there to *tacenda* at Bury; things that he could tell, but that he does not like to talk about; so also, when Samson dealt with these offences, he published only minor reasons against the guilty sacristan, "keeping silence as to the principal cause, as unwilling to hold him up to scandal"<sup>1</sup>. Similar phrases are very frequent in visitatorial records; at Dijon, for instance, there is a still unprinted letter from a Cistercian visitor who was trying, as yet vainly, to get the prioress of Cokehill deposed. After reciting some of her transgressions, he writes to his superiors at Cîteaux: "Other matters, fit rather for silence than for writing, I leave to the bearer of these letters, to whom I beg you to vouchsafe credence in all that he shall relate"<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, Pecham, in that case of the guilty bishop of 1279, father of five children, and accused of homicide, usury, simony and other like iniquities, wrote in strict secrecy to his predecessor Cardinal Kilwardby, not even venturing to express the culprit's name, and adding: "I beseech you, let no other's eye see this," though of course it would be known to the scribe of the register. Even the energetic and generally uncompromising Stephen of Tournai, discovering suddenly the scandals of sodomy at Ste-Geneviève-de-Paris, which had evidently escaped his notice for some time, and the continuance of which is still dishonouring his own

<sup>1</sup> *Chron.* C.S. pp. 22-3. Farther evidence in Appendix 21.

<sup>2</sup> I have given the original words, with other references, in E.H.R. *l.c.* p. 38, n. 60.

episcopal office as well as the monastery itself, lays his main emphasis on the public scandal:

With what cloak shall we cover the face of our immodesty? If these things were done in secret, the plague would be tolerable, since they could have been either dissembled or suppressed or concealed. But now, even though men should hold their tongues, the beams would speak and the stones would cry out. The finger of scorn is pointed at us, men wrinkle the nose at us, we are mocked with laughter and grinning; the layfolk in the streets condemn us, the boys [concerned] are beaten in the schools; the common women talk of us in their spinning-chambers<sup>1</sup>.

What is more, Odo Rigaldi himself, the Model of Good Life, was occasionally willing to defer a great deal to this principle. He notes of one of the canons of Pontoise:

Richard de Triguel is *infamatus* with a certain common harlot; yet there was no great scandal; we warned him to desist... Master Robert is *infamatus* with the gardener's maidservant, and has a child whereof she is still lying-in; here again there is no great scandal; we warned him to desist; moreover he behaves improperly in going barefooted outside his door to a certain workshop where women of ill-fame are often gathered together; we warned him to desist from such things<sup>2</sup>.

To have gone farther in punishment would have been to increase the scandal. For indeed the concealment of ecclesiastical failings was a recognized principle of canon law. Nicholas II, in a letter to Louis the Pious which Gratian incorporated in his *Decretum*, quotes as from the Emperor Constantine: "Verily, if with mine own eyes I had seen a priest of God, or any one of those who bear the monastic habit, in sin, then would I strip off mine own cloak to cover him, that no man might see him"<sup>3</sup>. The glossator compares this with another passage, where Innocent [I] speaks of tolerance as equivalent to consent: "He who ceaseth from opposing a manifest transgression is not free from the stain of secret fellowship therein"<sup>4</sup>. This, argues the glossator, is said of *manifest* faults; the other, of faults that are as yet concealed. In other words, we punish only that which cannot be concealed.

<sup>1</sup> *Epp. supp.* xi; P.L. vol. 211, col. 550.

<sup>2</sup> *Reg.* p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Pars I, dist. xcvi, c. 8; cf. pars II, c. xi, q. 1, cap. 41. The saying attributed to Constantine is, of course, apocryphal. It is quoted against critics of the Church by Molanus in his *De Picturis et Imaginibus Sacris*, cap. 88.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pars I, dist. lxxxiii, c. 3.

Again, an attentive study of the records will show how often the visitor had to content himself with very superficial evidence. The strict Odo Rigaldi often sets down merely "ut dicunt"; he will not pledge himself to the accuracy of what he has heard. In other records this sometimes comes out more clearly: *e.g.* the thirteenth-century visitations of Cluniac houses published by Luce and Bruel show how completely the visitors often depended, not on what they found for themselves, but on what the monks chose to tell them<sup>1</sup>. How, then, did this "as they say" correspond with the actuality of "as they did"? We may trace this most clearly and least invidiously in the domain of finance. Abbots and priors were bound by constantly-repeated statutes to procure correct balance-sheets at stated periods, generally quarterly, and at least yearly. Visitors were required to look closely into these accounts; what did they find there?

To begin with, there were often no such accounts forthcoming. Even Odo could not always keep his monks up to the mark here; and, when we come to the Norwich visitations, which appear to be rather over than under the average, we find with startling frequency "the prior does not render account"<sup>2</sup>. Again, when accounts were actually rendered, they needed the same scrutiny which such documents always will need, so long as human nature remains anything like what it is. The Wilhering *Modus Visitandi*, of about 1400 A.D., is very outspoken here<sup>3</sup>.

On the first day [of the visitation], after Chapter, let the Visitor ask for all acknowledgements of debts, and all deeds by which the convent has renounced lands, granges, pastures or other possessions; and then let him weigh the value of the money received against that of the aforesaid renunciations. Let him demand, as a matter of strict obedience, all writings and quittances and tallies, that he may thus prove the actual payment of debts, and no mere falsehoods trumped up for his eyes. Let him especially demand the account-

<sup>1</sup> We have seen how often, again, the dependent cells were not examined directly, but by hearsay.

<sup>2</sup> We may judge, I think, that no such detailed reports as those in the Norwich volume would have survived at all, unless the visitation had been of more than average regularity. In dioceses where the bishop was constantly non-resident (a very frequent medieval phenomenon, when so many prelates were royal clerks) it is unlikely that such business-like records were drawn up or preserved. And, if Norwich shows us a more favourable side than the average, the Lincoln records are decidedly higher still.

<sup>3</sup> *Stud. und Mittheil.* 1897 (vol. 18), pp. 95 ff.



rolls for the last 3 or 4 years preceding; that, by comparing the totals and balances, he may make certain in his own mind that the favourable report is contradicted by no dissonance of fraud. Moreover, when he has thus computed all receipts and expenses of borrowings, revenues, and incomings, and money received for wool<sup>1</sup>, let him beware of fraudulent accounts, and let all be tested by tallies or indentures, or by the oral testimony of all the monks; and let the true state of things thus be proved and brought to light; lest the Visitors (to the helpless confusion of the innocent inmates of the convent, whom they are bound to inform) be blinded by the violent guidance and tortuous implications of certain false and fraudulent monks (such as savour only of the things of this world, *viz.* their own belly-cheer and the pomp of men's praise, and who savour not the things that be of God or of their Order), and be miserably led to the infernal abyss of ignorance and blind darkness.

The painful involutions of this warning testify to the writer's anxiety; and a single case may be cited in corroboration from England. At Wenlock, in 1279, the visitors report:

The prior came hither 7 or 8 years ago, and (as he says) found the house in debt to the extent of 1700 marks; but we found this false, for he had found a debt of only 500; and these 500 could easily be paid from the goods and the debts due to the monastery which he found at his coming. But the prior thus counted at his coming: "In such a place there is wanting a grange worth 200 marks; on another manor, a deficit of 200 oxen, 100 cows, 3000 sheep; silver plate is wanting, worth so and so much," . . . and by thus computing, he sealed and made the community seal with their seal that the house was, or had been, 1700 marks in debt. But he did none of the things thus computed, neither [supplying] oxen nor cows nor sheep nor buildings.

They go on to describe the prior's shady business transactions; among other things he had illegally sold a holding and pocketed the price, "whereby he has, or had, the money, and the convent is defrauded and bound [by this alienation]." He had made false statements to the abbot of Cluny and to the visitor himself on other occasions; he will soon reduce Wenlock to the same state of insolvency in which the other Cluniac houses of Bermondsey and Northampton are: "for he sells or alienates whatsoever he can; it is commonly reported that, impelled by unrest

<sup>1</sup> Wilhering was a Cistercian house, and the Cistercians still kept their position as great wool-farmers.

and ambition, he did all he could to be elected at Rochester and escape from the authority of Cluny." The visitors' conclusion is "that it is almost or quite impossible to elicit the truth from English monks"<sup>1</sup>. We must bear in mind, of course, that these Cluniac visitors, sent from the mother-house in Burgundy, would have more difficulty than others in eliciting the full truth; yet, on the other hand, it would be far easier for any patient explorer to expose erroneous or falsified accounts, than to discover the truth in those many graver matters with which a visitor often had to deal. Moreover, for a great part of the Middle Ages, the discipline of the numerous Cluniac, Cistercian and Premonstratensian houses in England was mainly dependent on such foreign visitors as these. And, even where a diocese was in better order than the average, we may sometimes find a sudden revelation of irregularities that have long been going on unchecked. At Humberstone, in 1440, it was found that the monks ate illegally outside the refectory, "nor have they eaten in the refectory these twenty years past, except on Good Friday"<sup>2</sup>.

But (as both the Cluny visitors and the Wilhering manual show in gross, and as we may see in detail where the witnesses' evidence has been preserved) in all doubtful cases the energetic visitor could appeal to *communis fama*, to the general testimony of the monks, and would compel them to answer for their incriminated brother. What was this appeal worth?

A good deal, no doubt, though the effort to make concealment a matter of *ipso facto* excommunication always failed in the long run<sup>3</sup>. This abortive attempt in itself is most significant; it tells us the same tale as the similar abandonment of Gregory VII's decree that parishioners should abstain from the Masses of concubinary priests. The hierarchy soon found that Gregory's decree would result less in the betterment of the clergy than in the closing of churches; and, similarly, the attempt to excommunicate witnesses who connived at falsehood resulted in the burdening of many comparatively innocent consciences, while

<sup>1</sup> Duckett, *Charters, etc.* p. 138; a similar case of fictitious recognizances for debt in *Visitations, etc.* p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> *Alnwick*, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Eccleston in *Mon. Fra.* R.S. p. 29. For fuller evidence see Appendix 22.

the worst sinners went serenely on their way. The whole matter was admirably summed up in 1493 by Tritheim, who had access to documents which have since perished, and who perhaps, among all later medieval Benedictines, approached nearest to the wide and exact learning of the seventeenth-century scholars at St-Maur. He wrote, in his tractate *De Visitatione Monachorum*<sup>1</sup>:

But are the visitands to be compelled to speak, and to answer the truth concerning the interrogations, on oath? the question deserves consideration. You must know that, as I have found in the ancient statutes even of other provinces of our Order, an oath was exacted from the visitands when it seemed necessary. And this seems to me to be very reasonable even now, especially if the monks have conspired together, or have made a compact, or have maliciously concealed the truth. And, in my opinion, this statute ought to be confirmed. The cardinal legate Nicholas of Cusa writes thus, *inter alia*, to the visitors in the province of Mainz and the diocese of Bamberg: "But, seeing that many are little moved by the word of exhortation, if no penal censure be added by way of coercion, therefore, in the monasteries or houses which you are visiting, after salutary exhortation has been given, take from all a personal oath that they will tell the truth under examination, and then proceed according to the tenour of the commission which is granted to you by [my] other letters." Again, I have found the contrary of this in the [General] Chapter statutes. For in the sixth chapter, celebrated at Erfurt [in 1426], we read this statute: "Moreover, the [assembled] Fathers have resolved that the visitors should first preach, and then fulfil their task without exacting any oath"<sup>2</sup>. The same was decreed in the next Chapter, at Bamberg [1429], and similarly in some others. What then? If an oath be exacted, against the Fathers' decrees, the fault of disobedience is committed; [but] if it be wrong to exact it, wherefore did this illustrious doctor and cardinal legate of the Apostolic See command that it should be exacted? Can it be that the oath may, or may not, be exacted? Clearly *yes*, I think. Where it is necessary and profitable, it may be exacted; yet it must not be lightly exacted. But, that you may have at hand the form of such an oath, I have taken care to insert it here even as I have found it in

<sup>1</sup> *Opp. Pia*, 1605, p. 997, c. 21.

<sup>2</sup> The whole acts of this Chapter are given by Tritheim in another place, p. 1041. There is another significant decree: "The Presidents and all members of the Chapter have resolved to remove and release the sentences of excommunication fulminated in the preceding Chapters, lest they lay a snare for souls." It is evident that the attempt to tighten the reins of discipline had caused unfortunate reactions.

older constitutions of our Fathers, in order that, if ever it be needed, it may not be far to seek.

A little earlier, Gerson gives us almost equally definite evidence from France; his decision is that a monk is not bound to give himself away in answer to the questions of a superior, "if the deed be hidden, and the person be not defamed," nor need he under these circumstances fear the threat of excommunication<sup>1</sup>. And Gerson, like Trithem, was one of the most learned scholars and strictest moralists of his day. Moreover, all this is exactly borne out (as I hope to show in Appendix 22) by other evidence from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. The visitor had the legal power of putting the visitands on oath, but no wise visitor ever did so except under exceptional circumstances; and these Benedictine General Chapters themselves, after the oath had been tried as a fundamental feature of the great fifteenth-century reforms, went deliberately and resolutely back again, and reduced it to an occasional and permissive measure. Moreover, the records seem to show that, in the cases where oaths were enforced, there was either some particularly tangled question which ordinary interrogatories had failed to elucidate, and in which a certain number of witnesses were finally put upon their oath; or else, it was a question of money. The not infrequent contemporary criticism that too many visitors thought economic more important than moral questions is to a certain extent confirmed by their behaviour here, and by such a document as the Wilhering *Modus Visitandi* already quoted, where the financial enquiry is prescribed in very minute detail<sup>2</sup>. Yet, even here, the writer does not suggest the oath as a matter of ordinary routine; evidence is required of the monks "in virtue of obedience." He distinctly implies that, if only the visitor will hold a thorough audit and attend to the prescribed minutiae, a falsifier is sure to be caught. But we must remember that these money matters are more clearly matters of *Yes* or *No* than many moral questions; and, again, the perjurer would here run far more risk of confrontation with documents or similar concrete and irrefragable evidence; therefore an oath would be more likely to elicit the truth. The importance of the question at this

<sup>1</sup> *Opp.* vol. II, p. 370.

<sup>2</sup> *Stud. und Mittheil.* vol. 18 (1897), p. 95.

stage is obvious; if my reasoning be correct, this gives us some ground to suspect that the visitor often failed to elicit the full truth, even where he himself was regular and efficient. It must be added here that, even where the witnesses were thus put upon oath, it was explicitly allowed that they need not reveal hidden offences—*occulta crimina*<sup>1</sup>. This is explained by the glossator on *Decret. Greg.* l. v, tit. i, c. 18: "*Except hidden offences; for no enquiry ought to be made into these, but only on those on which there is this pre-existing infamia.*" Mabillon lays stress on this principle in visitatorial law: "Cet esprit de charité consiste à tenir les fautes cachées lorsqu'elles ne sont pas publiques; à ne pas rechercher celles dont on n'a point d'indices certains par des enquêtes empressées, mais de faire voir au contraire aux coupables que l'on souhaite les épargner autant que l'on peut" (*Ouvrages posthumes*, vol. II, p. 322; cf. pp. 326-7).

Again, even though we were more certain that the visitor himself did get at all the main facts, how far can we depend upon our surviving records as representing all that he elicited, or thought he elicited?

An episcopal register does not profess to be a full record of the bishop's activities. Visitations, especially, were kept in separate rolls or notebooks, which have very seldom survived. When we find, here and there, a visitation of some house recorded in the register, we can nearly always see that there was a special reason; the document is inserted either as supplying a convenient legal form for use on other occasions, or because the case was not yet really settled, and therefore this report must be filed for future reference. An admirable illustration may be taken from the Cluniac records, where the General Chapter register stands in the place of the bishop's register of his own diocese. In both cases, the visitors would, first of all, record their visitations in detail, often reproducing the actual words of the witnesses. Secondly, from these reports they compiled a far briefer summary, wherefrom the bishop or General Chapter could read, at a glance, the general state of all the houses visited. Thirdly, the bishop or chapter itself issued certain injunctions based upon the reports thus received, which injunctions were transcribed into a separate register, and could be supplied (in

<sup>1</sup> Durandus, *Spec. lib.* I, part iv, § 7, no. 30, and *Decret. Greg.* as in text.

copy) to the next set of visitors, who would thus be able to approach each monastery with a rough knowledge of its recent history, and to note whether the defects found three years before had, in the interval, been properly remedied. A good many of these Cluniac reports of the second and third instance have survived; and a careful comparison reveals some strikingly instructive facts, which, when once we have noted them, can be recognized also even in English dioceses, where we very seldom have the same full chance of comparison between one report and the others. The English Cluniac province was visited in 1275-6 by John, prior of Wenlock, and Arnulf, constable to the abbot of Cluny. At Thetford (March 4, 1276) they found that "Ralf the Cellarer is defamed of incontinence; we sent him to dwell elsewhere, as also another brother, Henry by name, because he had enormously and maliciously wounded one of the prior's servants." In that same year 1276, John and Arnulf presented their report to the General Chapter; yet there the records contain no report whatever concerning Thetford. The chapter is there concerned with only two matters in the whole English province—two more monks were to be sent to Horton, and the abbot of Cluny was to write to Edward I for the arrest of two monks of Bretton who had procured the imprisonment of the prior of Pontefract. "Other matters," adds the record, "the visitors corrected as best they could"—*secundum quod potuerunt*. Who could possibly have guessed, but for the chance survival of the abstract of the visitors' actual report, what Thetford facts underlay that phrase?<sup>1</sup>

Even more remarkable is the case of Istein nunnery, near Bâle. Here, in 1289, the visitors report that

Brother Guy, formerly prior of this nunnery<sup>2</sup>—as the nuns complained to us, and there is a noise thereof and great scandal among the clergy and people of Bâle and the whole neighbourhood—set or cast fire into the convent by night, while he was prior thereof, so that the whole building was burned, and a priest and a menial servant, who lay in that house which the prior set on fire, were smothered and consumed in the fire. Moreover, this ex-prior, that same night, pierced with his own hand all the barrels full of wine

<sup>1</sup> Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* p. 230; *Charters, etc.* vol. II, pp. 124-7.

<sup>2</sup> The foundation consisted of seven nuns, under the rule and guidance of a prior and a monk to keep him company.

in the cellar there, so that all the wine in the said barrels was spilt; and he fled forthwith by night and has never since returned. *Item*, the nuns of Istein have made two [new] nuns on their own authority, with consent of the ex-prior Guy<sup>1</sup>.

This report would not arrive in time for the General Chapter of that year 1289; nor had it, apparently, come in even by 1290<sup>2</sup>. The Chapter of 1290 evidently had to deal with an earlier report, now lost<sup>3</sup>, which might go some way to explain the prior's escapade. It runs:

Seeing that the nuns of Istein are *enormiter diffamatae* of incontinence, especially one named Isabel von Eneyrein, the diffinitors enjoin upon the priors of Bâle and Zell to visit this nunnery and correct by regular methods whatsoever they have there found to need correction.

Then come the Chapter acts of 1291, in which we have clear reference to the visit of 1289. But they only say: "At Istein are girls received without the authority of the [present] prior of that convent; the committee decrees that these be sent forth from the convent"<sup>4</sup>. This is only a very plain example of what may be traced everywhere. Visitors and scribes were not pre-occupied with leaving historical material for us; they wanted to record what would be of future business use to themselves. The prior had fled; perhaps somebody was engaged, more or less sincerely, in running him down and bringing him to punishment; but meanwhile the General Chapter was tempted, like Dogberry, to thank God for the riddance. On the other hand, the expulsion of these two unauthorized nuns must be recorded, in order that the next visitor might go forth armed with this decree and might verify whether they had been expelled or not. This was the principle which guided all bishops in compiling their registers. Some are far more business-like than others;

<sup>1</sup> Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* pp. 69, 240, 243.

<sup>2</sup> For time-relations between visits and Chapters, cf. pp. 28, 229; 11, 224 (where the Chapter of 1269 has no reference to the visits of that year); 98, 328.

<sup>3</sup> There is a gap from 1272 to 1289.

<sup>4</sup> It will be seen in my next volume that one of the greatest difficulties in nunneries was created by this practice of receiving fresh nuns, each with a dowry enough to wipe off for the moment some troublesome debt, yet not enough to indemnify the community for her lifelong expenses; this easy but fatal financial expedient is a frequent theme of visitatorial prohibitions.

one of the best is Grandisson's of Exeter, yet Grandisson enregisters very few sets of injunctions out of the many scores that he must have given, whether personally or by deputy. Moreover, in cases like Odo Rigaldi's register and the Norwich and Lincoln visitations, where we have an opportunity of comparing the injunctions with the faults actually found, it is evident that the injunctions themselves are not only not exhaustive, but sometimes omit just those points which would be most important for the modern historian engaged in this particular enquiry. We may even say that some of these were omitted not because they would be of no interest to posterity, but precisely because they would be too real and painful in their interest. The St Albans historian, Walsingham, tells a ghastly story of Sir John Arundel, who, in 1379, with the help of his soldiers carried off a number of schoolgirls and novices and nuns and married women from a convent near Southampton, took them off to sea, and finally, in a tempest, cast them overboard to lighten his ships<sup>1</sup>. Yet, though the Winchester registers are unusually full for this period, I think I am right in saying that no trace of this crime is to be found there; on the other hand, it is scarcely possible to imagine that the whole of Walsingham's very circumstantial story is a lie. Again, the Worcester monk writes under the year 1299: "On June 26, John, bishop of Llandaff, reconsecrated [*reconciliavit*] the [monastic] church of Pershore, because the *custos* of that church, infatuated by a woman's counsel, offered strange fire in the holy place"<sup>2</sup>. Here, again, the abundant register of Bishop Giffard alludes to a visitation of Pershore in 1301, but has no record of any such incident; only of 30 marks received there for procurations, *plus* "the gift of a palfrey" from the monks (p. 551). The totality of complaints recorded in surviving registers cannot represent, in quantity, more than the merest fraction of what was known to contemporaries; and, when we consider their quality, we must be prepared to find that the facts most significant for social

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Ang.* R.S. vol. 1, pp. 419 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ann. Monast.* R.S. vol. iv, p. 541. The quotation is from Numbers iii, 4; its meaning in this context may be inferred from Bromyard, *Sum. Pred.* O. vi, 76, Nic. de Lyra on Levit. x, 1, and *Anecdota Maredsoliana*, t. 1 (1913), p. 47. Moreover, the only other common cause for which a church needed reconciliation was that of bloodshed. Cf. p. 508 below.



or religious history are often those which were never recorded, or which have perished precisely because they were so significant. This will come out more clearly, perhaps, when we consider the conditions under which evidence was given. It was seldom a surprise visit; the authorities gave notice some time beforehand; so much transpires from all sources, and may most conveniently be studied in Professor Hamilton Thompson's *Lincoln Visitations*. This must have offered a great temptation to all who knew that they had anything to fear from the visitation; and we have very frequent evidence for connivance or conspiracy to defeat the ends of justice. It has been made an accusation against Henry VIII's visitors that they show the grossest bias here, and that, being unable to obtain confession or definite proof, they wantonly surmised secret collusion on the part of abbots and monks: "there is grave suspicion that the abbot and convent had agreed together not to tell anything against themselves"<sup>1</sup>. Yet those particular visitors, though for their general honesty there is very little to be said on the whole, were in this case, and on one other very important point on which they have been attacked, following faithfully in the steps of their most orthodox and saintly predecessors. It had been a commonplace among visitors, for generations past, that one of the worst obstacles to truth was the natural habit of conspiracy among the visitands. In Trithem's *Form of Visitation*, this is the fundamental and preliminary question: "Let them *first* enquire concerning conspiracies, pacts, and oaths, lest by chance the abbot have presumed to order something of this kind against your visitation"<sup>2</sup>. This precaution had already been voiced in the questionnaires, though less emphatically, from at least 1259 onwards; the fifty-third on the list of questions recorded by the Burton annalist runs: "Whether [the monks] have entered into a conspiracy against the [visiting] bishop's coming"<sup>3</sup>. Pecham, ordering a visitation of Bardney in 1279, carefully fortified his visitors at this point:

Lest their wickedness succeed in setting a barrier in the way of this enquiry, under pretext of any conspiracy, sealed with an oath or in writing, to conceal the truth from us or from our representa-

<sup>1</sup> See especially Appendix 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Opp. Pia*, 1605, p. 993.

<sup>3</sup> *Ann. Monast.* R.S. vol. 1, p. 486.

tives, we declare that any such oath is unlawful and invalid, and that any writings are of no effect whatsoever; and we command, under pain of excommunication which we lay on all who disobey this, that no superior or monk refuse to tell you the truth; on the contrary, let them be bound, on their obedience, openly to tell the naked truth, as they would escape this penalty [of excommunication]<sup>1</sup>.

At Barking nunnery, again, he anticipates that sinners may have bound themselves by oath to conceal their transgressions (*ibid.* p. 85). About 1170, Stephen of Tournai, bishop of Paris, had to contend with three great abbots who attempted to conceal the "foul *infamia* wherewith the abbot of St-Martin-de-Tournai and some of his younger monks were sorely stained," by conspiring together and pronouncing sentence of excommunication on "any monk of St Martin's who should disclose or hint anything of what pertains to the correction of the said monastery"<sup>2</sup>. In 1221, the Cistercian General Chapter named a commission to discover whether the report was true that the abbot of L'Escalé-Dieu,

when he visits his daughter-houses, stays too long there with a great train of horses and, when he leaves, takes money for his expenses; also that he amended nothing of the things which were propounded against one abbot of his filiation whom he visited, but recorded upon paper as his own command that, if anyone henceforth should mention these things, he should be wholly subjected to the doom pronounced upon conspirators.

If found guilty, he was to be deposed<sup>3</sup>. Yet the Order was still compelled to legislate against this abuse; and at last, in 1300, it fulminates with renewed emphasis against the "conspirators, incendiaries...and those who hinder the rebukes or excommunications pronounced by the visitors or judges appointed by the General Chapter," through whom "many and very great complaints have arisen against our Order." Yet the authorities can only decree that the sentence of excommunication, which had long stood on the Cistercian statute-book against such

<sup>1</sup> *Epp.* p. 55. It will be noticed that the strong implication here is against any *regular* routine of putting the visitands on oath for every question that was put to them.

<sup>2</sup> *Epp.* supp. x; P.L. vol. 211, col. 549.

<sup>3</sup> Martène, *Thes.* vol. IV, an. 1221, § 26; see the case of the abbot of Valbonne immediately following, who "gave many goods at the visitation."

offenders, should now be actually enforced<sup>1</sup>. It is significant also that the Cistercian statutes should have attempted to guard against collusion by forbidding give-and-take in visitation; no abbot may visit the house whose abbot has visited his own (*Nomast. Cist.* p. 272, 1200 A.D.). In 1313, when Bishop Drovensford visited Bath and Glastonbury, at each of these abbeys he began by protesting against conspiracies: "Since, owing to the illicit oaths of secrecy, made to defeat correction, the truth cannot be detected, we now warn you that all such devices are unlawful. We annul and recall such oaths, and pronounce Excommunication (reserving Absolution to ourselves) on all who have joined in them, or refuse to answer our inquiry"<sup>2</sup>. In 1448, when the papal legate set about the reformation of the monastery of Hönigen and other monasteries, he granted the visitors special powers to reduce the monks to the observance of the Rule, "notwithstanding the statutes and customs of the aforesaid monasteries and Order, whatsoever they be that stand in our way, even though they be defended by the bond of an oath or by any other confirmation"<sup>3</sup>. In 1492, when the Cistercian visitors came to Warden, they were told that the abbot had begun by calling his monks to chapter and promising amendment, "and then forbade all and singular, under many threats, to report the truth concerning the faults of the monastery to the reformers." In 1517, a still more striking case is recorded at Littlemore, and is summarized as follows in the *County History*: "The house was in a shocking state. The *comperta* are, that the prioress had ordered the 5 nuns under her to say that all was well; she herself had an illegitimate daughter and was still visited by the father of the child... That another of the nuns had, within the last year, an illegitimate child... Dilapidation, peculation, etc. The prioress first denied, then confessed... that, though these things had been going on for 8 years, no enquiry had been made, and it seems no visitation of the house had been held; only, on one occasion, certain injunctions of a general kind had been sent her"<sup>4</sup>. About the same time, we have a significant document from the north<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Martène, *Thes.* vol. iv, col. 1497.

<sup>2</sup> *Reg. Drovensford*, p. 153.

<sup>3</sup> Remling, vol. II, p. 328.

<sup>4</sup> *V.C.H., Oxford*, vol. II, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> *Star Chamber, Lancs.* pt I (1916), p. 129.

To the kyng our soveraign lorde. Sheweth your true liege man Giles Huncote, brother of one Dan Ottewell, late monke in the abbey of Combermere, co. Chester, that where, on the 11th of Feb. 11 Hen. VIII [1519-20] one John Jenyns, being then household servant with the abbot of the seid place, occupying the fete of tanner's craft with the seid abbot, with a dagger stroke the seid monke to the hert, and slew him out of hand. Whereuppon fresshe sute was made by oon Henry Watson, then servant to the seid abbot, to have taken the same murdrer, who resorted unto Thomas Hamond, the prior, ther beyng with the seid prior one Dan Edmond, a monk, Thomas Hokingthorp, Henry Cristelton, Robert Egge and William Frenche, servantes to the said abbot, which had brought the body of the seid dead monke into a chambre of the seid abbey, and leide him uppon a bed in his clothes; the prior refused to have the seid murdrer taken, saying: "This abbey is allredy in an evyll name for usyng of mysrule." And therefore he wold have this murdre kept secret, and that it should not be opynly knowen, for then the abbey should be undone for ever. So he desired those present to kepe counsell, and caused them to be sworn uppon a boke to concele the same. And afterwards the murdrer was kept in the abbey, and used the occupation of a barker there for half a yere and more. About an 8 weekes past oon Thomas Sounde, oon of the yemen of your moost honorable crown, havynge understandyng of the seid murdre, and how the murdrer was kepte there, arrested hym of suspesion of felony, and brought hym to your geale of Chester, where he now remayneth in prison. But he cannot be indicted because ytt is soo borne by dyvers persons of the seid shire. Wherefore the complainant begs a commission of indifferent gentlemen to enquire [etc.].

The fact that all these records are so natural, does not make them less significant. Here, after all, was only another side of what was often complained of, that the clergy had a natural temptation to confederate in defence of any member who was accused, however justly, of crime: *e.g.* St Germain, *Spiritualitie and Temporalitie*, ch. iii, f. 10 b; ch. x, f. 26 a; ch. xii, f. 35 a. Therefore (says Dionysius Carthusianus, in agreement with St Bernard), evil Religious cling together like the scales of the Leviathan, and are impenetrable; their unanimity in persecuting the good, and in resisting reform for themselves, is wonderful<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the sinner who could not conspire with his fellows on earth might conspire with a saint in heaven. Even so good

<sup>1</sup> *Opp.* vol. v, p. 31; for farther evidence, see Appendix 24.

a moralist as Étienne de Bourbon is quite content that a guilty abbess, having first made her private peace with the Virgin Mary, should successfully deny her crime before the visiting bishop; the moralist only draws the line at punishing, on this particular occasion, those nuns who had brought against her what was in fact a perfectly true accusation<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Bourbon, p. 114.

## CHAPTER XIX

### EVIDENTIAL VALUES (3)

HERE we come to another important consideration, that of the *lex talionis*. This very natural rule, that a false accuser must pay the penalty of his malice or error, found its way early from civil to Church law, and might, like all other medieval legislation, be treated strictly or loosely at the judge's caprice. It comes, I think, more or less explicitly, in the statutes of nearly all the Orders<sup>1</sup>; and we meet occasional indications of its strict enforcement, as when certain monks are punished by special decree of the General Chapter for bringing accusations against the abbot of Cîteaux<sup>2</sup>. A typical example of its employment by an unusually business-like visitor is in Odo Rigaldi's register (p. 578; 1267 A.D.): a monk of Corneville had accused his abbot of many crimes to the archbishop, and also, in writing, to the archbishop's official. Odo, therefore, compelled both in full chapter to stand by his judgement; he himself was to hold a special enquiry, in person or by proxy, questioning any witnesses whom he pleased, and proceeding to punish either the abbot or the monk according to his own judgement; for this agreement, the archbishop registered ten solemn witnesses. A still more interesting case is Peck's transcripts from the Premonstratensian records; here an abbot is reported to the Chapter General as *graviter diffamatus* of incontinence; a special commission of enquiry finds that the report originated in his

<sup>1</sup> Eg. for the Dominicans, *Archiv*, vol. 1, p. 208 (1220) and Reichert, *Mon. O.P.* vol. 1, p. 9 (1236); for the reformed Franciscan nuns of Ste-Colette, Wadding, *Annales*, an. 1435, p. 261; for the English Benedictines, General Chapter of 1277 (MS. Bod. 39, f. 57, 2, kindly communicated to me by Mr H. E. Salter), borrowed from the Cistercian Statutes of 1217 (Martène, *Thes.* vol. iv, col. 1319, § 6, and an. 1252, § 17; cf. *Lib. Antiq. Def.* dist. vii, § 8); compare General Chapter of 1426 (Reynerus, *App.* 3, p. 190; Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. III, p. 470); for the Austin canons, Salter, *Aug. Chap.* p. 264; this is borrowed from the Cistercian statutes of 1217.

<sup>2</sup> Martène, *Thes.* vol. iv, an. 1223, § 19; cf. again 1225, § 35 and the case of A.D. 1193 in Winter, *Cist.* vol. III, p. 205. For other striking examples of this *lex talionis*, see Luchaire, *Latran*, p. 149; Duckett, *Visitations*, etc. pp. 222-3, 241, 256; *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* vol. III, p. 26.

"frequent access to a certain lady," but decides that the damaging deductions from this fact were due to the malice of three of the brethren, who are therefore punished by banishment to remote houses<sup>1</sup>.

Far more serious, in proportion to its illegality and its frequency, was the danger of private revenge. Though medieval society systematically encouraged tale-bearing, yet it had little power to protect the tale-bearer; why, then, should the average monk risk his own comfort at least, and possibly his skin, through a zeal for righteousness which could not always count upon the support of the average visitor? In those small monastic societies, where, even under the laxest interpretation of chapter 66 of the Benedictine Rule, there was no escape from daily and lifelong companionship; where, again, the monk ordinarily carried a knife<sup>2</sup> and sometimes, especially on the Continent, a sword or dagger<sup>3</sup>, provocation might be a very serious matter; and, at the least, it must have involved very strained social relations for some time to come. Of this we have very abundant evidence. The abbot, to begin with, had enormous power over any monk whom he might be tempted to bully; the Jesuit principle of "obedience like a corpse"—*perinde ac cadaver*—was not an entire innovation in monasticism. St Benedict's prescriptions are very strict, even when we take full account of the saving clauses; obedience was one of the "three substantial" of the vow, from which the pope himself could not absolve. And St Francis, while reacting in so many other ways, is equally emphatic here; he definitely anticipates Loyola's simile of the corpse<sup>4</sup>. It was hard for the monk to fix the point at which it became morally lawful for him to inform to an outsider against his abbot; and, even when his conscience was clear upon the moral problem, it might be yet more difficult to follow that conscience in the face of a despotic and unscrupulous superior.

<sup>1</sup> *Coll. Anglo-Prem.* vol. II, pp. 202-3; about 1255.

<sup>2</sup> "And abbot [Samson] said that he would never come among us [his monks of Bury] by reason of the conspiracies and oaths which (as he said) we had made against him, to be slain by our knives" (Jocelin of Brakelond, C.S. p. 87; cf. Salter, *Aug. Chap.* p. 64, and *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* vol. II, pp. 124, 218).

<sup>3</sup> For monks bearing murderous weapons, see Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* (E.E.T.S.), II, 8, 639 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Mirror of Perfection*, c. 48.

Gilles li Muisis, himself abbot of St-Martin-de-Tournai, describes how the abbot whom he first remembers there,

at the Devil's instigation, began to neglect spiritual things and make great expenses, to omit corrections and almsgiving, and so to make great debts at usury, supported by the counsel of many monks whom he had promoted to the government of the monastery; and who, wishing to stay in their offices and administrations, gainsaid nothing against the abbot's will<sup>1</sup>.

Matthew Paris, summing up the life of Abbot Warin of St Albans (1183-95), describes him as negligent in discipline, and wasteful; yet

those who spake against these things, and who rebuked his excesses, he sent away to far-off cells, in order that they might not be able, even in writing<sup>2</sup>, to disclose the complaints of their inmost heart; wherefore many ended a miserable life as exiles, in utter bitterness of mind and amid frequent curses<sup>3</sup>.

Again, the abbot of Ste-Colombe-de-Sens, in 1225, had reduced his house almost to beggary; he had dowered his daughters out of the abbey goods and had married his niece to a monk; he "asserted that he had received licence from the king of France to cast any into prison who should appeal from him to the pope, and launched a general excommunication on all who appealed or procured any enquiry into his conduct." It needed the direct interference of the pope, and of one of the strongest among medieval French bishops, to reform this abbey, if indeed it was ever really reformed<sup>4</sup>. The prior of Walsingham, in 1514, had himself killed a peasant, and he threatened vengeance against

<sup>1</sup> De Smet. vol. II, p. 116. The result was a misgovernment of fifty years which brought the abbey almost to ruin; compare Jocelin's account of Samson's predecessor.

<sup>2</sup> Practically all the monastic codes forbade the writing of letters by monks or nuns without explicit consent from their superior.

<sup>3</sup> *Hist. Abb.* R.S. vol. I, p. 216. Compare *Pièces détachées*, p. 330 (Marmoutier gravely relaxed in discipline, A.D. 1256; some of the dependent priors remonstrate with the abbot; finally the pope has to "send letters of reprimand to the abbot, commanding him not to depose these priors who had complained against him"). Also J. du Breul, *Aimoïn*, p. 838: "Seeing that monks sometimes fear to reveal the transgressions of their abbots or priors, lest they be sent as it were into exile in unknown and remote provinces, therefore we [Benedict XII] have thought fit to provide a remedy for this disease." Cf. *ibid.* pp. 845, 849.

<sup>4</sup> Valois, pp. 93, 335. The author expresses doubts as to the final issue of this reform (p. 94).



all who should take part against him at the coming visitation. At the neighbouring abbey of Wymondham, that same year, we find: "Dom John Harleston says that the prior is a malicious man, and that he drew a sword last Lententide to smite dom Richard Cambridge, whom he would have slain if he [John] had not hindered him"<sup>1</sup>. In 1535, John Musard, a monk of Worcester, wrote to Henry VIII's visitor, bringing against the prior certain charges of waste and peculation which are rendered probable not only by the prior's own book of accounts but also by other details lately brought out by Canon J. M. Wilson<sup>2</sup>. Among other things, he is accused of having enclosed 200 or 300 acres of land, stolen from his poor tenants, to enlarge his park; a charge which must have been easy to check. After rehearsing this and other matters, Musard proceeds:

Part of the foresaid griev[anc]es I have put up with in all visitations for the space of these 16 years, and the end thereof ever hath been without reformation, the visitor rewarded, and soon after poor Musard to prison for telling truth, and some other that hath said their conscience subdued, and all by gifts.

Two centuries before this, the Franciscan Bozon had complained that prelates frequently shrink from offending the great, and are bold only against the poor.

And not only prelates, but common folk also fear to tell the truth; when they sit in company and talk of the wrongs that are done in the land or in Religion by the masters who have watch over others, then they say and promise that they will amend these things if ever the right time and place come; but when the man comes who can cause things to be mended [*i.e.* the Visitor], then none dares to speak, but they do as the mice did of old [when none dared to bell the cat]<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Vis. Norwich*, C.S. pp. 97, 114.

<sup>2</sup> E.H.R. 1925, p. 87. The writers who have minimized this and similar evidence, assuming that we have here simply a pack of slanders, have allowed themselves to be hypnotized by the unquestionable rascality of some of Thomas Cromwell's methods and instruments, and have paid no attention to earlier monastic history. The ablest of them, Dr James Gairdner, confessed at the end of his long life that he had judged too superficially on monastic questions, and that, as better advised, he now saw the Tudor monasteries in a far less favourable light. It is worth noting that not only in this letter, but in his others, Musard appeals for public judgement, and specifies details which must have been capable of easy disproof if they had been false. (*Let. and Pap.* vol. ix, pp. 211, 235; for Gairdner's disparaging verdict see *Introd.* pp. xxi ff.)

<sup>3</sup> *Contes moralisés*, ed. L. T. Smith and P. Meyer, 1889, p. 144.

Bromyard speaks of jurymen and visitands who, even when bound by oath to tell the truth, "say that they dare not, lest they be beaten or slain, or their houses burned down"<sup>1</sup>. It is not surprising, therefore, that Tritheim should warn all visitors emphatically here:

Let them diligently beware of committing to the abbot their schedules of [witnesses'] depositions, lest, however zealous he be, some occasion of ill-blood [*malignandi*] arise; on the contrary, let them take these away to lay them before the presidents [at General Chapter], or else, if they have no use for them, burn them with fire<sup>2</sup>. Pecham, in 1282, had found extravagance and indiscipline in his cathedral priory; he had visited; and the prior begs instantly to know the names of his accusers among the brethren; the archbishop passes this by, with a general exhortation to peace<sup>3</sup>. At Mottisfont, in 1284, he found the prior under grave suspicion of incontinence; he forbade him thenceforth to have suspicious relations with any woman, and laid him under excommunication,

if you grieve, or procure to be grieved, whether directly or through a third person, by reason of this our visitation, any canon or lay brother; or even if you permit him to be grieved deliberately, by withdrawing any solace either in word or in deed. Moreover, we extend this sentence, in like case, to all the canons. And if perchance, at the devil's instigation, it befall thee to presume against this, by bringing vexation upon any person or persons for the cause aforesaid, let it be free to the injured party to intimate his grievances to us, wheresoever we may be, notwithstanding any inhibitions to the contrary<sup>4</sup>.

Notices of this kind crop up very frequently in visitatorial injunctions, down to the very end, and these notices are corroborated by chance evidence from other sources. Giraldus Cambrensis tells, though not with direct reference to this visitation-question, a terrible story of a wicked prior's vengeance on an innocent young monk in a great English abbey (*Opp.*

<sup>1</sup> *Sum. Pred.* V, I, ix *ad fin.*

<sup>2</sup> *Opp. Pia*, p. 997; cf. a similar Franciscan prescription in Wadding, *Ann.* 1263, vol. IV, p. 513.

<sup>3</sup> *Epp.* p. 346.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 647; similar injunctions to the abbesses of Wherwell (p. 655) and Romsey (p. 661), and the prior of Southwick (p. 667); so also his successor, Reynolds, to the prior of Canterbury cathedral (Wilkins, vol. II, p. 455). See farther, Appendix 17.

R.S. vol. II, p. 89). Even in the earlier days of the Franciscan Order, the Provincial of England, Albert of Pisa, commending the friars of this country for their unusual fidelity to the Rule, spoke of them as "ready to go with him into prison or into exile for the reform of the Order"<sup>1</sup>. It is notorious that the bitterest persecutors of the spiritual Franciscans were found among their own brethren; and cold-blooded documents might be cited to corroborate the satirist's prophecy of that friar's fate who had ceased to keep in touch with his fellows as a mendicant useful to the community:

Under a pot he schal be put, in a privie chambre,  
That he schal lyven ne last but litell while after!<sup>2</sup>

For it must be remembered that one of the most frequent findings in visitatorial reports is neglect of the conventual sick; and nothing would be easier than to neglect still farther any sick brother who was also a thorn in the flesh. True, the Wilhering visitors' manual of about 1400 encourages monks to tell the real truth by assuring them "that the things here said ought to be kept secret... therefore let anyone speak out boldly"<sup>3</sup>; but the monks themselves were under no illusion here. Notices of revenge for evidence given, or persecution of strict brethren by their relaxed fellows, rather multiply as time goes on; here, for instance, is a sweeping generalization from the verge of the Reformation. In 1493, the abbot of Cîteaux publicly specified certain principal hindrances to reform; one of these was that "when the proper visitors or commissaries come to visit the Religious, they scarce find any man to speak wherewithal; and men hold no account of all the ordinances they may decree; moreover, what is more to be feared, they are often in danger of their own persons"<sup>4</sup>. This melancholy generalization is borne

<sup>1</sup> *Mon. Fra.* R.S. p. 55; the first edition of Father Cuthbert's translation distorts the whole sense of the passage by omitting the crucial words of the Order (p. 213).

<sup>2</sup> *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, l. 267. The case here contemplated is that of a friar too old to beg profitably, but at Marseilles in 1318 four friars were publicly burned for (*inter alia*) refusing to beg under conditions which St Francis also would have refused.

<sup>3</sup> *Stud. und Mittheil.* vol. 18 (1897), p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> *Analecta Gallicana*, vol. II, p. 344. Benedict XII, in his famous articles of monastic reform (1335-7) had anticipated the possibility of disorders in connexion with General Chapter discussions and visitations which might result in "death or maiming" (Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. II, pp. 592-3).

out by a contemporary concrete case. At the visitation of the Cistercian abbey of Warden in Bedfordshire (1492), Dom John Clifton supported Dom John Butler's complaint that the abbot had tried to arrange a conspiracy of silence: "He [Clifton] says that he would wish to say more but for the many prohibitions received from his friends, who asserted that, if he revealed to the reformers anything that was in any way displeasing or adverse to his own abbot, he would indubitably fall into peril of death; therefore he dares not to disclose any more"<sup>1</sup>. Yet the Cistercian Order was still, where any distinction can be drawn, rather above than below the main body of Benedictines and Cluniacs in discipline. Almost at the same moment, Felix Hemmerlin was severely wounded by a would-be murderer in the pay of his fellow-canons at Zürich, whose irregularities he had attempted to reform<sup>2</sup>. Many other such concrete cases of murder or attempted murder, for discipline's sake, have come down to us even among the fragmentary wreckage of monastic documents. I quoted some in my first volume (pp. 256 ff.); others will be found here in Appendix 26. Even the Carthusian Order, which has real reason to boast unusual regularity, was obliged to decree in 1261: "Let all monasteries of our Order have a sufficient prison, wherein criminals may be enclosed for penance, and everyone who threatens death or fire [against any person in this Order], until the Chapter shall ordain otherwise for him." This was repeated shortly afterwards (General Chapter of about 1300); and again, in 1332, the first statute runs: "Let those who have not built a prison in their monasteries before the coming of the first visitors confess their fault at the next Chapter General"<sup>3</sup>. Again, one of our most significant records comes from England a few years before the Dissolution. Archbishop Warham's provincial council, in 1529, was moved to legislate against "those whom the diocesan bishops may judge, from signs and vehement indications, either to have conspired in the past in order to slay their abbots, priors, or the brethren of their monastery, or to be likely in future to conspire or in any way to compass their death"<sup>4</sup>. Here, as in

<sup>1</sup> Bib. Dijon, MSS. de Cîteaux, quaternus docketed *Informaciones facte in Wardona*, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Reber, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> P.L. vol. 153, coll. 1135, 1146, 1149.

<sup>4</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. III, p. 723.

many other fields, the medieval university and the monastery help us to understand each other. Dr Rashdall writes: "From the frequent insistence on secrecy of voting [for degree examinations], and the oaths against taking vengeance upon the Examiners, it is evident that [the rejection of a candidate] was not unattended by personal risk"<sup>1</sup>.

But, side by side with the culprit's chances of escape, there are adverse chances also. Not all offenders are "happy"; not all provinces are irregularly visited; not all visitors are either to be deterred by dangers and difficulties or to be softened by direct or indirect gifts; not all witnesses are intimidated, or supinely glad to purchase conventual peace by easy silence; some, indeed, will lean the other way; visitors are frequently warned *ne credant omni spiritui*; there is the spirit of backbiting to be reckoned with, as well as the spirit of simple truth. Therefore, fairly frequently, the visitor finds himself face to face with an accusation, either individual or collective. The head of the house reports adversely on one or more of the brethren, or some brother accuses another, or there is a definite evil report in the neighbourhood. Dom John or Dom Albon is *infamatus* of such and such an offence. Sometimes he is so frank, or the matter is so notorious, that he confesses outright; but if not, what next? He must then purge himself of this *infamia*, or he will be judged guilty. The general process can perhaps be studied better in the Lincoln, Norwich and Anglo-Premonstratensian visitations than in any other surviving documents; and this is the more interesting, since there can be little doubt that the English Religious stood decidedly, if not very far, above the general average in regularity. Professor Hamilton Thompson has given an excellent analysis of Bishop Alnwick's procedure in these circumstances:

These preliminaries over, the visitor proceeded to his preparatory inquisition. The chapterhouse was cleared, and the members of the house, one by one, made their appearance before the bishop and his assessors.... Where a house was large, the bishop sometimes saved time by deputing one or more of his clerks to examine indi-

<sup>1</sup> *Universities*, vol. I, p. 461 and note 2. Mr Potter supplies me with three other examples: F. G. Bianco, *Köln. Anlagen*, pp. 66 ff.; M. Fournier, *Statuts et Privilèges*, vol. III, p. 303; J. C. H. Weissenborn, *Akten d. Erfurter Univ.* vol. II, p. 137.

viduals simultaneously with himself. These examinations were conducted in strict privacy; the person under examination was encouraged to speak freely and was subjected to some cross-questioning. The items of the various depositions, taken down by one or more notaries, were called the *detecta*, i.e. matters discovered to the bishop, and from these, the result of the preparatory inquiry, were formed the *comperta*, i.e. matters discovered by the bishop. Such cases as the *detecta* indicated as worthy of special inquiry were then dealt with. Members of the convent who were accused of serious breaches of rule were summoned before the visitor, and a series of articles, embodying the details of such accusations, was read to them. If they pleaded guilty, the bishop enjoined a suitable penance; if they professed innocence, he required them to find compurgators, naming a special hour for their appearance. The accused were usually treated with lenience, and anyone who failed to find compurgators at the first attempt was allowed some hours' grace until his efforts proved hopeless and his case broke down. When this business was concluded, the convent was called together, the bishop published the *detecta* and *comperta* and delivered short verbal injunctions founded upon their chief points. The visitation was then dissolved, or if any unsatisfactory business remained to be cleared up, was prorogued till a suitable date, the conclusion being usually entrusted to commissaries<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore, our next step must be to estimate the value of the compurgation system.

Sometimes the accused was allowed to purge himself *unica manu*; i.e. his single oath of innocence was admitted as proof. Commonly, however, other compurgators were demanded, theoretically numerous in proportion to the seriousness of the accusation, who must pledge their oaths also to their belief in Dom John's innocence. Let us begin, here again, with Professor Hamilton Thompson's estimate of Alnwick.

In the prescription of penalties and in the admission of purgations Alnwick was merciful and easy. This may be seen by reference to the visitation of Humberstone abbey, a small house where discipline was in an advanced stage of decay and five monks had gone into

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln Record Soc. *Visitations of Religious Houses*, vol. I, p. x; cf. vol. II, p. xlvii. This "strict privacy," however, must have been rather theoretical than practical; there were the bishop's clerks, sometimes numerous, and we have frequent evidence for leakage of testimony. Moreover, Alnwick was an unusually careful visitor; I have met elsewhere with complaints that the bishop brought attendants not duly sworn to secrecy, but have, unfortunately, kept no record of these cases.

apostasy within recent years. Only five monks were in residence, so that, where any charge was denied and purgation was required, the choice of compurgators was extremely limited. Although the monks were ready to supply abundant *detecta*, they were equally ready to corroborate one another's innocence; and the chief offender in the convent, who confessed to several charges of neglect and irregular conduct and received light penance, was allowed to clear himself of a serious charge upon his own unsupported oath. At the secular college of Irthlingborough, where complaints and counter-complaints were freely made, the sub-dean, Walter Luffenham, stood accused of a number of misdeeds. When, however, an accusation of adultery was brought against him and he was ordered to find four compurgators, the dean and three other canons came to his assistance, in spite of the fact that three out of the four had laid information against him on other grounds and that all were under suspicion of conduct unbefitting their profession. Nevertheless, when it came to a charge of violence inflicted upon one of them by Luffenham some years previously, the offended person refused to support his denial and he was obliged to confess... If therefore, we are inclined to think that penalties were too light and purgations too easy, and that a more severe treatment of faults would have worked the reformation which visitations were powerless to effect, it is necessary to remember that a diocesan bishop was not in command of an all-sufficient machinery with which to execute his purposes<sup>1</sup>.

That is the system as worked by an energetic medieval bishop and described by a sympathetic modern historian; let us now turn to its seamy side, as exposed by a contemporary chancellor of Oxford. We have a note from his hand in one of the official registers of the University, under the date 1443.

"Compurgation at Oxford," he wrote, "is an occasion of intolerable iniquity.... At Oxford, many men make no account of perjury (notwithstanding that this is a more grievous sin than homicide, as St Thomas Aquinas sheweth in his *Secunda Secundae*); for I have known many who have sworn to their innocence of the crime laid to their charge, although they have afterwards confessed their guilt privately."

Moreover (says Gascoigne) no man could protest against the compurgators, or offer definite incriminating evidence, without risk of life or limb; since "the man who purgeth himself, and his abettors, will secretly maim or slay such an one"<sup>2</sup>. A con-

<sup>1</sup> *L.c.* vol. II, p. lix. See Appendix 27 for farther evidence.

<sup>2</sup> *Munim. Academica*, R.S. p. 536.

temporary statute of the University of Padua runs: "Lest our whole University go to ruin, and its scholars be held henceforth perjured and forgers and infamous, it is hereby enacted that, whensoever in our statutes anything be enjoined upon pain of perjury, instead of the word *perjury* we shall henceforth read *a fine of five pounds, and loss of vote for a year*"<sup>1</sup>. No doubt, university society was rather unfavourable ground for the efficient working of such a system; but a monastery must have offered equal temptations for granting undue support to the accused, and even greater dangers for refusing it. As early as the ninth century, we find Archbishop Hincmar of Reims complaining that "some [of the priests], as we have found by experience, have conspired together to help each other in their purgation, even as those priests, full of wicked thoughts, conspired against Susanna"; he therefore advises bishops to examine the compurgators and assure himself of their good faith<sup>2</sup>. In 1292, we find Edward I writing to the bishop of Worcester, "forbidding him to take the purgation of clerks detained in his prison, whose crimes are notorious, but with regard to others he may take such purgation"<sup>3</sup>. About the same time, Pecham had to deal with a criminous archdeacon who succeeded in turning his purgation into a farce; his guilt was notorious, yet he escaped *sub fictae purgationis umbraculo*. On the other hand, Pecham rebukes the bishop of Norwich for putting illegal difficulties in the way of the purgation of mere layfolk; this prelate would cause the accused and his compurgators to travel 20 or 30 miles for trial, and would repel any compurgator who was poorly clad, "as though a marriage-garment were needed for purgation," with the result that men paid the bishop heavy fines "to redeem their vexation"<sup>4</sup>. The St Alban's monk Walsingham records a visitation of the monastery by a new abbot in 1326. He writes:

There were, indeed, at this visitation, certain things which notably needed reformation; yet, by reason of men's wickedness, they were

<sup>1</sup> Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. II, p. 689 n. Compare the Oxford statute of 1432, which speaks of "the pecuniary penalty, which in these days is more feared than any other" with reference to the futility of excommunications (*Munim. Acad.* p. 305).

<sup>2</sup> *Statutes whereby Masters and Deans ought to make enquiry in each church, and report to the Bishop*, no. xxv; P.L. vol. 125, col. 785.

<sup>3</sup> *Reg. Giffard Worcs.* p. 410.

<sup>4</sup> *Epp.* R.S. pp. 178, 364.



not so notably reformed; for instance, many [*plures*] were accused of carnal lapses, some of whom purged themselves, God knows how! others confessed, or half-confessed, and submitted to canonical penance; yet, after a while, the lord abbot relaxed this very [*satis*] mercifully, little by little, and with a certain moderation. Others again, denounced as "propriétaires," were corrected very mercifully<sup>1</sup>.

The implications of this "God knows how" are borne out by a recently-printed remark of a medieval chief justice, Sir William Bereford, who thus condemned the compurgation system: "Now, God forbid that anyone should [thus] get his law about a matter that can be tried by a jury, so that with a dozen or half a dozen ruffians he could swear an honest man out of his goods"<sup>2</sup>.

And the concrete cases recorded, however scattered and fragmentary, often point in the same direction. Dr Rashdall emphasizes the defects of the system as he finds it in the medieval universities; Bishop Hobhouse, Dr Willis-Bund, Professor Hamilton Thompson are uniformly uncomplimentary, though each judges the system separately on its own merits or demerits, as revealed in the different visitation-records which each happens to be editing. Doctor Power draws a moving picture of a guilty prioress, allowed by special grace to cut down her compurgators to four, and then going vainly "from nun to nun, imploring each to forswear herself"<sup>3</sup>. And the one defensive plea which I have found expressed from any quarter demanding serious attention reposes upon a single case which is neither conclusive in itself, nor essentially different, apparently, from a good many others which might be quoted from similar records<sup>4</sup>.

There is one more line of evidence which, though indirect, is perhaps none the less valuable, since we may advance more confidently when the cross-lights afford us substantially the same indications as the main lights. A careful analysis of any batch of visitations will generally show a strikingly disproportionate number of abbots, priors or high officials accused of serious breaches of the Rule, and especially of incontinence. However small may be the total number of high officials thus stigmatized in any given register, I think they will nearly always be found considerably more, in proportion, than the rank and

<sup>1</sup> *Gest. Abb.* R.S. vol. III, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> *M.E. Nunneries*, p. 458.

<sup>3</sup> E.H.R. Oct. 1924, p. 630.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 27.

file, and sometimes strangely disproportionate. Mr Egerton Beck claims to have gone through all the Benedictine notices, over a very large body of records, between 1275 and the Reformation<sup>1</sup>. With his main thesis, which rests upon the assumption that these records are fairly exhaustive, we need not concern ourselves here; he has refused to produce evidence for this assumption, which seems absurd on the very face of his own documents, since all authorities, medieval and modern, agree in estimating the morality of the larger houses higher than that of the smaller, yet nearly all the sinners that Mr Beck has discovered come from large or upper-middle monasteries. But for the present purpose his statistics are very valuable, since he has striven laboriously to cover the whole of his own chosen field; and therefore these figures, compiled with no consideration of the present argument—indeed, with no other purpose than that of proving the purity of medieval monastic life—are not the less typical for being far from exhaustive. The sixteen men's houses on his list in which one member or more were accused of immorality must have had an aggregate population of at least 365 souls; among these, 10 were abbots and 16 priors. Of the abbots, 5 are on the black list, and 7 of the priors, *i.e.* 12 out of 26, or over 46 per cent. Among the remaining monastic populations, 2 subpriors were accused, 1 third prior, 1 cellarer, and about 22 common monks<sup>2</sup>; total 26, or not quite 8 per cent. In the women's houses, the proportion is different. Here we have 7 convents, probably containing at least 150 persons. Only 1 prioress is accused, and about 18 nuns<sup>3</sup>; the respective percentages, therefore, are less than 1, as compared with 12. May not this be explained partly by the fact that abbesses and prioresses would generally be a good deal older than the average of nuns, and partly also by what I have already noted, that a woman's lapse was so much harder to conceal, and that the "incest" of a "Bride of Christ" caused so much more scandal?

The brief Cluniac visitation of England in 1279 yields similar

<sup>1</sup> *The Month*, Aug. 1921, pp. 10 ff., criticized in the 15th of my *Medieval Studies*.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* thirteen definitely specified, with three other cases where they are spoken of in the plural; I am assuming, in order to be certain of not exaggerating the contrast, that in each of these cases three monks were concerned.

<sup>3</sup> *I.e.* fifteen, *plus* one plural case which I count as three.

results<sup>1</sup>. Here we know the exact population of the five incriminated houses; it totals 73. Of these 5 were priors, and they yielded 3 black sheep, or 60 per cent. The 68 monks yielded 5, or only  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. This is a small area, which gives exaggerated results; but my point comes out clearly again from a survey of the far longer series which fills about 300 8vo. pages in Duckett's *Visitations and Chapters General of Cluni*, and extends in time from 1269 to 1379, over Switzerland, Franche-Comté, Lorraine and England. Here, according to different possible interpretations of the records, the criminal heads of houses number from 25 to 45 per cent. and the monks from 17 to 21<sup>2</sup>. Or, again, let us take the cases in *Collectanea Anglo-Premonstratensia*. Here we have 18 houses concerned; and, here also, we know the number of inmates pretty exactly; we may calculate the percentage of peccant abbots at 50 or 55, while the others (among whom were 3 subpriors) come only to 15 or 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ . Without having worked out the actual figures, I believe that the disproportion would be found even more striking in Ambrose of Camaldoli's visitations. On the other hand, in the Cluniac visitations published by Bruel we have 11 monks noted, and no priors<sup>3</sup>. But these concern only the single province of Auvergne, and I have noted no other parallel. Moreover, when we look at these cases where ordinary monks are reported to the General Chapter, we find that in almost every one there was either some enormous scandal, or some other special and obvious reason why the case should be fixed in black and white for future reference, by visitors or scribes who might omit other less urgent cases.

How, then, are we to explain these startling contrasts? On the one hand, superiors and principal officers of the monastery had certainly greater temptations and opportunities; these come out clearly in Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale*, and the Mary-legend of *Le Moine Sacristain*, and the novel of *Petit Jean de Saintré*. There are stories with that same moral in monastic collections, and Pépin corrects the proverb *honores mutant mores* into *honores monstrant mores*, adding "Therefore it is a common saying that we never know of what sort a monk is, until he be

<sup>1</sup> Duckett, *Chapters, etc.* vol. I. pp. 131 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For these different calculations see Appendix 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Bib. Éc. Chartes*, 1891, pp. 64 ff.

made abbot"<sup>1</sup>. Yet it would be strange if these temptations were not counterbalanced, in the long run, by the superior age and (in spite of the numerous exceptions which meet us) the superior trustworthiness of the abbot or prior when compared with the mere rank and file. And, certainly, we could not trace the whole lesson of these remarkable statistics to such causes without taking the lowest possible view of conventual discipline; we should thus ascribe the humble cloisterer's cleaner bill to mere lack of opportunity; we should be compelled to think of him in terms of that Ovidian sneer which the monk himself applied to the female sex: "Casta est, quam nemo rogavit." It seems far more likely that this curious contrast is explicable by that principle which, it is now admitted on all sides, lies at the very foundation of episcopal registers and similar records. The registrar's main question always was: "What prospect does this particular record offer of future business utility? If it is an abbot or prior who gets into trouble, we may need sooner or later to attempt his deposition; and, for that, we shall need an exact record of his past. In the case of the common cloisterer, he has done, or is presumed to have done, his penance; let us now let bygones be bygones; unless there be, here again, some special need to keep the record in view of future difficulties." But in any case, however we may try to explain the facts, I do not see how they can be reconciled with any theory which assumes our surviving records of monastic lapses to be even approximately exhaustive. It seems incredible that abbots and priors should really have been incontinent in a proportion so overwhelmingly greater than that of the monks over whom they ruled. We have a very close historical analogy here in the medieval university documents. A portion of the Oxford chancellor's court records has survived for the fifteenth century; if

<sup>1</sup> *Sermones*, f. 93 a, 1. Hugues de St-Cher seems to imply the same (vol. VI, f. 6, 1). He writes: "Note that monks or cloister brethren in a convent are like children in the womb; for they are not curious about food, and eat common food. Again, because they are warm, and fear not the cold, nor are they seen, and they keep silence. But they are born when they are sent to a priorate, or become abbots. But many are a generation of vipers, not awaiting the [natural] time of their birth; this is like Rachel's peril of life when Benjamin was born. Nowadays there is a contention [as between Jacob and Esau], which shall be born first. But Esau is born first, because the evil are promoted sooner than the good, as in Matthew xxvii; *Not this man, but Barabbas.*"

we were to take these as exhaustive, we should have to decide that the masters were rather more than ten times more criminal, in proportion to their numbers, than the undergraduates<sup>1</sup>.

The contemporary evidence, therefore, confirms that judgement which most people would probably form *a priori*. To begin with, it is unduly optimistic to expect full and exhaustive disclosures from any judicial enquiry whatsoever. Secondly, when we are dealing with the Middle Ages, such an expectation is also anachronistic: for it is a commonplace among medievalists that exceptions were everywhere so frequent as to form a sort of rule in themselves; at that time, both in Church and in State, theory and practice were far more widely separated than in modern society. Finally, there is abundance of detailed evidence to support these presumptions drawn from human nature in general and from medieval nature in particular; and, if we may trust the direct and indirect testimony which reaches us from every quarter, then the not infrequent modern assumption that we may treat these ancient records as approximately exhaustive would have seemed most laughable to the men who had most to do with their actual compilation.

But I feel that this chapter might be misunderstood if I failed to add a farther warning to the reader. I have no intention of there implying more than I actually say; and I deprecate all deductions which might go beyond my written words. I quote the proportion of peccant officials (p. 290) simply as proof that we cannot possibly treat the surviving reports as exhaustive, and that we must attempt to get behind them. This, and certain other points, seem to emerge almost indisputably; but I commit myself here to no more. It is only in later chapters that I shall go farther, and attempt to show how contemporaries interpreted facts with which they were more familiar than we can be, and from which they were better qualified to draw the true inferences. Therefore these chapters (xvii-xxi) are only preparatory to the contemporary judgements which will be quoted later.

<sup>1</sup> *Mun. Acad. R.S.* pp. 505 ff.

## CHAPTER XX

### DISCIPLINE (1)

WE may advance now from this long discussion of the written record to a farther question, equally important for any true estimate of the part played by Religious during these two centuries. When serious breaches of discipline were discovered, what happened next under this visitation-system? What chance had the offender of impunity, or to what effect was he likely to be really punished? There is no anachronism in pressing this question; we do not thus look back with merely modern eyes upon a remote and misunderstood past; on the contrary, medieval disciplinarians insist with quite a modern emphasis on the fatal consequences of impunity or of inadequate penalties. We differ from them, not in the stress which we lay upon reasonable punishment as a deterrent, but in the extent to which we are able to practise this universally-admitted theory. The Dominican general, Humbert de Romans, insists on the truth of St Bernard's words: *Impunity is the child of carelessness, the mother of indiscipline, the root of impudence, and the nurse of transgressions*<sup>1</sup>. And St Bernard was only emphasizing what had been said before him by disciplinarians like St Hugh of Cluny and Ratpert of St-Gallen: "Monasteries are dishonoured not by the monks' faults but by their impunity"; "Impunity is the worst of all claustral corruptions"<sup>2</sup>. Successive disciplinarians, as time went on, emphasized the truth that, with an institution too vast to respond in every member to the immediate personal influence of a single great ruler or of a small saintly group, no effective discipline is possible without some reasonable certainty of punishment for grave offences.

If the medieval sinner had plenty of money, his first refuge would be the court of Rome, and this is one reason why the authorities could afford to neglect no precaution against a pec-

<sup>1</sup> *Max. Bib. Pat.* vol. xxv, col. 723, from *De consideratione*, l. III, c. v, § 20; compare Antoninus, *Summa* (pars III, tit. xx, c. 5, § 3; the more numerous the sinners, the more necessary is strict punishment from the visitor).

<sup>2</sup> Lorain, *Hist. de Cluny*, 1845, p. 183; Ekkehard, *Casus*, c. III, p. 24.

cant abbot. St Bernard's protests against papal interference with discipline, in this multitude of cases where the diocesan was pretty certain to know the facts better than anybody could judge them at Rome, had produced no lasting effect<sup>1</sup>. Stephen of Tournai, bishop of Paris and St Bernard's younger contemporary, supplies us with concrete examples, which indeed may be found almost everywhere. One of the brethren of Ste-Geneviève had been five times expelled "for his intolerable and enormous transgressions"; banished from France, he had revenged himself by "beating several of his former brethren; and at length he impiously struck, with repeated blows of his fist, our prior, a religious and honourable man." Yet he is now at the Roman court, hoping to get a papal letter of reinstatement, and Stephen writes to a cardinal in the hope of frustrating this<sup>2</sup>. He has soon a similar difficulty with certain rebellious monks of Corbey; again, the pope has listened to an appeal of the undisciplined monks of St Satyrus against their reforming abbot; if this goes on, "the impunity of guilt will bring forth incentives to transgression... Religion will be dissolved, the Order will be troubled... Permit prelates to correct transgressions according to the Rule." Samson's predecessor at Bury bought of the pope an exemption from the legate's visitation, and had to sell some of the most solemn of the church ornaments to pay the price<sup>3</sup>. Already at the outset of our period, the papacy had swallowed up the original rights of diocesan bishops and archbishops. In 1203 and 1205, when the archbishop of Sens visited his province, Innocent III reminded him that he did this "not so much by thine own authority as by Ours"; yet such visitation had been an immemorial episcopal right and duty<sup>4</sup>. Even in Innocent's own day, under the eyes of this pope who humbled princes all over Europe, this excessive centralization was a very

<sup>1</sup> This is the main theme of the 3rd book of his *De consideratione*. Even earlier, he had written to Innocent II complaining of the extent to which notorious monastic or episcopal sinners found protection at Rome; "they come back and boast of having found protectors where they ought rather to have felt the lash of an avenger... the friends [of the Church] are confounded; the faithful are mocked; bishops everywhere become an object of derision and scorn" (*Ep.* 178; cf. 180). For farther evidence see Appendix 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* p. 38; P.L. vol. 211, col. 338; cf. coll. 350, 519; also a non-monastic appeal against justice, col. 555.

<sup>3</sup> Jocelin of Brakelond, C.S. p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Luchaire, *Latran*, p. 147.

doubtful gain: under his successors, it was often a curse. Here, for instance, is what happened in England under the powerful Gregory IX, one of the three or four medieval popes who did most for monastic reform. In 1233, three visitors were appointed for the exempt Benedictines, who "strove to grieve them with excessive severity, and constrain them to cease from flesh-eating outside the infirmary, and from drinking after collation"—in other words, who fought against abuses which a few energetic popes and all good monastic reformers, from that time down to the Dissolution, attempted to put down. Thereupon the great houses appealed to the pope; the visitors, having a papal commission, took no notice of the appeal and excommunicated the monks; the result was, that the pope quashed this sentence and recalled them. One of the visitors, again, was repulsed from Evesham, which put itself under the protection of the see of Canterbury<sup>1</sup>. "The exempt Religious," wrote Archbishop Pecham in 1281, "deem themselves as free as the wild ass's colt"; and even those who had no legal exemption constantly thwarted him, as they had thwarted Grosseteste's attempts to discipline them, by appeals to Rome, the result of which is that "the wolf sits in judgement on the shepherd." Worse still, others obtained exemptions through forgery: "We mourn to say that there are in England innumerable privileges fabricated by forgers . . . unless a special inquisition be made of this matter by men who will not be bribed with gold and silver, then it will end in the intolerable subversion of the English Church through this cause"<sup>2</sup>. Gascoigne, in the fifteenth century, asserted that "almost all corrections of souls are destroyed by appeals or by inhibitions of the Court of Arches in London"—*i.e.* by appeals to the pope or the archbishop. And he gives one damning instance from his own experience.

O ye bishops, attend and see how, in these days of ours, almost all your power is annulled and as it were destroyed by papal concessions and indulgences granted verbally from the pope, and watch and see whether this is by reason of the abuse of your power, or by the usurpation and greed of the Roman court and its courtiers. For

<sup>1</sup> *Ann. Mon. R.S.* vol. III, p. 133. Compare St Antonino's story of Humbert de Romans in Appendix 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Epp.* p. 237; cf. pp. 307, 378, 192.



lately, as I know, the bishop of Chichester, Master Richard Praty, D.D. of Oxford, excommunicated a certain vicar of abominable reputation and deprived him of his benefice; and this same vicar, after a long vexation in the Court of Arches, required the bishop under heavy penalties to absolve him from excommunication, in virtue of the power of absolution granted by pope Eugenius to any proper priest for any person who was of the fraternity of St Anthony's hospital in London.

The bishop in this case, an exceptionally strong man, refused to comply, protesting, "I do not believe that the pope granted it in words; and I know that he cannot grant it in reality"<sup>1</sup>. Nor was it the English Church alone, but all the churches which suffered thus; the full evidence would but weary the reader. Bishop Ludwig of Speyer (1478-1484) struggled, like his predecessor, to reform the numerous tainted monasteries of his diocese; but "in many convents the bishop's good intentions were thwarted; for, instead of submitting, the monks sought to escape from strict discipline by procuring licences from Rome to change their houses into secular foundations"<sup>2</sup>. And, as nearly as possible at this same time, the reforming abbot Trithem condemns the whole system in words of burning indignation. He is speaking of those who, wishing to lead an easier life, get papal dispensations to pass from one Order to another.

Object not to me thy dispensation from the Roman Pontiff; for, unless God approve this, it will be far from excusing thee; not all things are pleasing to God which are done on earth by the Supreme Pontiff. If thou cry out in wrath against me, as against one who judgeth the deeds of Christ's Vicar, then I answer: "I embrace, worship and revere the Supreme Pontiff as Christ's true Vicar; I am far from reprehending his deeds; but I know him for a man who, being human, both can and doth err. This is no marvel; for, in such a care for all the churches, amid such press of business, when falsehoods are told for truths, the mind is easily distracted amid so many things and deceived. But thou, apostate from a holy Order, who weenest to be safe with thy bull of dispensation, beware lest, after

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Ver.* pp. 32, 34. It is impossible, in the face of the general evidence, to accept Dr W. H. Frere's optimistic judgement that the generality of Benedictines and Austin canons "had every opportunity that visitation can give of being maintained at a high level, or else reformed" (*Visitations and Injunctions*, vol. 1, p. 81).

<sup>2</sup> Remling, *Speyer*, vol. II, p. 188.

death, thou fulfil that vulgar proverb, and fall into the hands of some illiterate demon who cannot read<sup>1</sup>.

The language is no stronger, after all, than St Bernard's; but we cannot escape from the significance of this fact, that the great German was saying in 1490 exactly what the great Frenchman had said nearly four centuries earlier, and that each provokes that impatiently patient question of the Apocalypse: *How long, O Lord!*

For the pope's decree, which was almost certain to prove effectual when he interfered to stay a sinner's punishment, could by no means be counted upon with equal certainty when he lent his aid to avenging justice; two instances may suffice here out of a multitude. Honorius IV, while the papacy was still almost at its height of power, had no means of enforcing reform upon a monastery under his own nose in Rome but by ejecting the recalcitrant Benedictines and giving their house and their endowments to nuns of St Clare<sup>2</sup>. Again, in 1318, Archbishop Henry of Cologne published certain papal constitutions for the reform of Religious and secular clergy; the clergy of Cologne refused to recognize them because he had published them without the consent of his cathedral chapter<sup>3</sup>. Dom Berlière points out very truly how far the European task exceeded the powers of any central authority, and how the greatest of monastic reforms came not from Rome but, sporadically, from the monasteries themselves<sup>4</sup>. We have seen this with St Bernard and the Mendicants; we shall see it again in the fifteenth century.

Sometimes, again (as we have seen already here and there), it was the diocesan bishop or archbishop who hindered visitors and reformers of all kinds, through mere conservatism, or jealousy, or definitely corrupt motives. This will come out with startling force in some of the visitors' own records with which I deal in my last volume; meanwhile one or two instances may be given to show that here, as elsewhere, the Black Death makes no absolute dividing line in monastic history; it only hastened certain currents which had been running strongly for

<sup>1</sup> *Dehort.* p. 242 (*De Statu et Ruina*, c. 4). For farther evidence see Appendix 29.

<sup>2</sup> Wadding, an. 1285; vol. v, p. 147. Cf. Appendix 30.

<sup>3</sup> Knipping, *Reg. d. Erzb. v. Köln*, Bd iv, p. 239.

<sup>4</sup> *Honorius*, pp. 249-50.

generations past. Giraldus Cambrensis speaks of the hindrances caused by prelates<sup>1</sup>. Grosseteste complains that the archbishop entertains false or frivolous appeals, and thus the visiting bishop's work is built upon sand. Stephen of Tournai writes to the pope in words of most urgent supplication; can he not repress the brethren of St-Jean-de-Soissons, who tread their Rule under foot, refuse obedience to their abbot, and have enlisted the bishop on their side<sup>2</sup>? The Cluniac authorities, in 1305, had the same difficulty which Grosseteste had with frivolous appeals to the archbishop of Canterbury's court. An entry in the General Chapter records runs:

Seeing that Michael L., William L., Reginald C., Robert S., Richard A., and John F., monks of Lewes, are *diffamati* of the vice of incontinence; *item*, seeing that they have been convicted of conspiracy against their prior; *item*, seeing that they have called upon the protection of the archbishop of Canterbury in prejudice of the privileges of the Order, *item*, seeing that the said brother Reginald has been convicted of the crimes of usury and *proprietas*, therefore the diffinitors decree that the said Robert, who is now in the monastery of Lewes, be arrested and imprisoned; let the chamberlain and all the priors in England give efficacious aid and effort for the arrest and imprisonment of the rest; and, if need be, let a contribution for this purpose be made by all the priors in England, and let them help each other in the prosecution of this case; and let the lord abbot [of Cluny] write of this matter to the lord king<sup>3</sup>.

Where no pope or prelate stood in the way, it was often a king or a great noble, as when Pecham incurred the wrath of Edward I by bringing back a runaway monk to Canterbury priory in 1285<sup>4</sup>. Again, in 1311, the Premonstratensian visitors found the abbot of Halesowen incontinent and generally unfit to rule, the prior (a priest's son) so unworthy that none of the monks would go to him in confession, another monk incontinent, "and several others, *diffamati* in many ways of various things,

<sup>1</sup> *Opp.* R.S. vol. II, pp. 294-5. Grosseteste, *Epp.* R.S. p. 275; cf. H. B. Workman, *Ev. Mon. Ideal*, p. 17. For late fifteenth-century complaints, see Trithem, *Opp. Pia*, p. 1058 (General Chapter of 1479 protests against hindrance of visitation by "diocesans or princes or nobles"); and again Dion. Carthusianus, *Opera*, vol. 38, p. 242 (if the visitor cannot trust his bishop to be proof against favour or bribes, let him get help from "some Godfearing and fit persons").

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* p. 95; P.L. vol. 211, col. 387.

<sup>3</sup> Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* p. 278.

<sup>4</sup> *Reg. Epp.* R.S. p. 875.

convicted and confessing." But the abbot exhibited a writ from Edward II forbidding the levy of taxes from English monasteries to be taken abroad; and, under cover of this prohibition, "with malice aforethought and pre-arranged treachery, he caused us to be wickedly and atrociously expelled from his monastery, not even allowing us to be entertained at our own expense in any of his granges or even of his farmsteads." The visitors retaliated with excommunication, but with what result? The records are silent<sup>1</sup>. In France also, a monastic sinner would sometimes escape by appealing to the king<sup>2</sup>. The Calendars of Papal Registers contain frequent letters of protection to monasteries, especially of women, against the intrusions of great folk who cared little for monastic discipline; and here is a similar case from the German records. The bishop of Speyer, in his injunctions of 1304 to the nunneries of Seebach and Schönfeld, anticipates that the abbesses may find it hard to enforce even the most necessary discipline.

Item, if clerics or monks or even layfolk shall presume to frequent your convents against the form of law, to wit, without reasonable and manifest cause, we command that ye abbesses, who are notoriously responsible above all others for the custody of your flock, should keep watchful care over them and defend your nuns by proper methods from the frequentation and conversation of such men, seeing that (as we are warned in canon law) men should seldom have access to virgins devoted to God, and their speech should be brief. And if, by reason of this, any vexation be brought upon you from within or from without, we command, and we lay it upon your conscience that ye report to us or to our vicegerent the names of those who thus molest you, that so we may chastise them with the canonical penalties, knowing that we can by no means wink at or pass over such unruly acts in monasteries committed to our care, to the peril of souls, the disgrace of religion, and the scandal of the people.

He advises great care even when workmen are allowed in the convent for necessary repairs<sup>3</sup>.

But by far the greatest difficulties arose from the offenders themselves; this was natural enough. Under the unsettled social and political conditions which were normal in the Middle Ages,

<sup>1</sup> *Coll. Anglo-Prem.* vol. 1, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Analecta Gallicana*, vol. II, p. 345 (1492).

<sup>3</sup> *Remling*, vol. 1, p. 329.

it was often possible to ignore the law, especially the general laws of a distant legislator, as apart from the customary law of one's own neighbourhood. Therefore, even under the strongest temporal or spiritual rulers, and in cases where justice could leave no room for doubt, we find very startling instances of successful resistance on the part of a resolute offender; Luther's *pecca fortiter* was a thoroughly medieval maxim. Sturmhoeft gives details of a case in which a German abbess defied St Bernard's pupil, Pope Eugenius III, and his legate. She was wasting the convent goods and making the house into a brothel; yet she managed to hold her ground from 1146 to 1152<sup>1</sup>. Gregory X, again, was an exceptionally strong and holy pope; and, with an Ecumenical Council at his back, he succeeded in deposing Bishop Henry of Liège, but only after Henry had scandalized Christendom for nearly thirty years.

"You have taken a Benedictine abbess," so ran the pope's accusation, "for your public concubine, and at a feast you boasted publicly of having had in twenty-two months no less than fourteen children, to some of whom you have given or procured benefices even with the cure of souls, although they were under age; others you have dowered richly for marriage out of the goods of your see."

One (or two?) other abbesses and a nun were among his concubines; his financial rule was as irregular as his spiritual; he never said his breviary, "being illiterate and not understanding it," yet he had owed his original appointment mainly to Innocent IV, an exceptionally strong pope<sup>2</sup>.

But it is even more instructive to take a case from the reign of Innocent III, who was unquestionably the greatest pope of our period. The heresies in Languedoc, which assumed international importance and were the direct excuse for the medieval inquisition, had their own root mainly in the unworthiness of the clergy there, and especially of the archbishops of Narbonne and Auch.

"Hence it is," wrote Innocent to his legate in 1200, "that the

<sup>1</sup> *Gerhoh v. Reichensberg*, II, Teil, s. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.* an. 1273, § 26; cf. 1264, § 26 and 1274, § 42. This act of signal justice apparently astonished contemporaries: "it was [then] said that the pope still remembered how, when he himself had been archdeacon of Liège, the bishop had kicked him in the chest in full chapter" (*l.c.*).

heretical assault has advanced; hence proceeds the detraction of tyrants and the people's contempt for God and the Church<sup>1</sup>. Hence it is that the prelates become the scorn of the laity, and that priests and people are alike evil. But the cause and source of all these evils is said, in these letters [I receive], to be [Bérenger] archbishop of Narbonne, whose God is money and whose glory is in his confusion . . . whose heart is where his treasure is, and who loves the sight of gold better than that of the sun. Though he has been archbishop for more than ten years, *stans magni nominis umbra*, he has not once visited his province, nor even his own immediate diocese."

Therefore, in all those rich territories, second only to Italy in their continuous heritage of Roman civilization, "there are more Manichaeans now than Christians, more disciples of Simon Magus than of Simon Peter." Even among the so-called orthodox, "all, in the prophet's words, from the least unto the greatest, set their hearts upon covetousness and love gifts and follow after bribes, justifying the wicked for gifts and taking away the justice of the just from him." This had been going on for ten years; moreover, before that, Bérenger had been bishop of Ilerda; before that, again, abbot of a great monastery. The great pope, who at one time or another brought the strongest sovereigns in Europe to submission, is now fully aware of the scandal; much more is here at stake for religion than in any of those quarrels which Innocent will maintain so successfully against the emperors, against Philippe-Auguste of France and John of England; *Roma locuta est*, in a matter in which her rights are quite clear and undisputed; here, therefore, if anywhere, is a crucial test for the medieval visitation-system. What, then, is the result<sup>2</sup>?

We warned this archbishop, in the power of the Holy Ghost and under threat of God's doom, that he should summon a council for a subsidy to the Holy Land; yet he, neither fearing God nor revering the Apostolic See, to the grievous scandal of clergy and people, either would not fulfil, or scorned to fulfil, our command.

Therefore Innocent commissions the legate for the correction of all these and other excesses: "Be of strong courage; gird thyself with the zeal of ancient law; draw the sword of eccle-

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 214, col. 905; for the other details see vol. 215, coll. 355, 356; vol. 216, coll. 283, 408, 789.

<sup>2</sup> For an excellent summary of Innocent's immense power over the Church in other ways, see Luchaire, *Latran*, pp. 128-57.

siastical vengeance against these transgressors of Canon Law, lest, waxing the worse for their impunity, they condemn it when they are come to the depth of vice." Yet this threat of excommunication, which might have brought a sovereign to his knees, left the archbishop untouched. Four years later, Innocent is again bewailing the state of Languedoc; the heretics are finding their strongest arguments in the lives of the prelates; the archbishop of Narbonne is still neglecting all his duties; he patronizes robber-barons, "exercises neither hospitality nor almsgiving; and often, though sound in body, passes a week or two without entering his church; wherefore some count him as a heretic." Therefore

the members [*i.e.* the clergy of the diocese] take such contagion from the sickness of their head, that many monks and canons regular have cast off the religious habit, keep public concubines, some of whom have been torn from the embraces of their husbands, practise usury, . . . or assume the part of minstrels or buffoons—*joculatores*—or usurp the office of a physician.

The laity, with such examples before their eyes, make themselves contemptible to the heretics by their immoralities; it is time to lay the axe to the root of this tree; the papal legates are to make enquiry, and, if they find these things to be true, depose Bérenger without appeal and elect some fit pastor. Six years later, in 1210,

This clamour which has long gone up against the archbishops of Narbonne and Auch has waxed so great that we can no longer wink at it without peril. Lest, therefore, they gain advantage from their iniquity (since, as it is asserted, they are not merely negligent but pestilent),

the legates are to make enquiry again, and, with God alone before their eyes, decree without appeal whatsoever they judge to be right. Yet it was only two years later, after more than twenty-one years of scandal in Languedoc, that Bérenger was at last deposed, five months before his death.

There remained the archbishop of Auch. In 1211, Innocent addressed him directly by letter. He had now been nineteen years a bishop; would he not take pity on the grievous ruin of his see, both in spiritual and in temporal things, and sacrifice worldly gain to make his peace with God and the Holy See by

spontaneous resignation? "If not, seeing that we are bound by the duty of our apostolic service to provide both for thy soul's health and for the prosperity of the Church in thy province, we shall dispose in this matter as seems to us most expedient." At the same time, Innocent wrote to his two legates commanding them to use all their influence in this matter. Yet two years later, in 1213, this impenitent sinner is still in office, although "the lamentations of the church of Auch, groaning and weeping under the gloomy blindness of its archbishop, have long steamed upwards to our apostolic ears." He has made light of excommunication; and, desisting from celebrating service,

not only does he not fulfil his pontifical office in teaching his flock, but by the example of his detestable life and conversation he infects and corrupts them, being set in the midst of so many crimes, which cover him as with a cloak, that even though he should wish to work for the correction of his subjects, and to preach those good works which he doeth not, his words would come back empty to his bosom, since he himself contradicts them in deed. . . . To name a few of the many crimes imputed to him, he is reported to be a receiver and abettor of heretics, a notorious dicer and spendthrift, simoniacal and perjured, and so utterly given up to the iniquity of carnal lusts that, pouring himself forth like water, he shrinks not even from incestuous connexions. Now, therefore, the axe must be laid to the root of this pestilent tree. Let the legates suspend him from his office; let them warn him that he is now publicly *infamatus* of many and grievous crimes, and let them call upon him to purge himself, within one month, by his own oath and those of five bishops his neighbours; failing this, let them depose him and appoint some fit person in his stead<sup>1</sup>.

There is, I think, no farther mention of the archbishop in Innocent's letters; but, according to Gams, he seems to have held his office about two years longer.

These difficulties will scarcely surprise anyone who has carefully followed, for instance, the corresponding difficulties which Innocent found when he attempted to assert the claims of justice over his crusaders and over the Latin kingdom of Constantinople; but such parallels increase, rather than diminish, the significance of his failure in a province where, at first sight,

<sup>1</sup> The full significance of these three steps: (1) diffamation, (2) monition, and (3) condemnation, will appear very plainly in the celebrated St Albans case of Abbot Wallingford when we come to the verge of the Reformation.



he might seem to be so strong. He had, in fact, in the last resort, a very imperfect control over feudalism and a feudalized Church. There was the initial difficulty of ousting a baron from his barony; for such was the bishop and such was his bishopric from one very real point of view. And secondly, even when Bérenger was gone, where was the "fit person" to put in his place, in an age when the most religious men were often the most unwilling, for purely religious reasons, to accept episcopal privileges and duties? St Bernard always showed a lively sense of the moral dangers besetting the episcopate. One of his most fervent disciples, Geoffroi de Péronne, persistently refused the office, and came back from the dead to assure a friend, on the authority of the Holy Ghost, that its acceptance would have led him to hell. St Bonaventura refused the archbishopric of York; Albert the Great was held to have "set a blot upon his own glory and that of his Order" by accepting the see of Regensburg; while pious and orthodox monks could whisper to each other, in the licensed exaggeration of pious horror, "the Church is now come to such a pass that it is not worthy to be ruled but by bishops doomed to damnation"<sup>1</sup>.

The present argument is little affected by the fact that one of these two sinners who defied Innocent III does not seem ever to have taken monastic vows. The law of visitation and the difficulties of execution were very much the same in regular or secular cases; and, when these things were done in the green tree of Innocent III, we may infer that they were even worse in the dry. Moreover, the detailed evidence here is overwhelming, and I make no attempt to exhaust it even in the Appendix. Anyone who will take the trouble to read a few monastic chronicles, and a few visitation-records, with this subject in his mind, will find himself noting significant cases so frequently that he will soon be tempted to desist. The Evesham story, to which we shall come in Chapters xxiv and xxv, is almost conclusive in itself. But a few cases may be cited here to show how frequent and how successful was the resistance of notorious

<sup>1</sup> Caes. Heisterbach, *Dial.* vol. II, pp. 27-8; cf. pp. 39-40. For the other cases I give references in *From St Francis to Dante*, ed. 2, p. 284. Petrus Dorlandus the Carthusian, writing about 1500, tells of an early Carthusian a tale exactly similar to that of Geoffroi de Péronne (*Chron. Cart.* p. 262).

sinner in the face of the existing laws and the constituted authorities.

St Bernard had already generalized in terms which anticipate what we find in Innocent III's letters. Writing to his own pupil, Eugenius III, he asks:

Did not thine own mouth, in the chapter held at Reims, pronounce the decrees which I shall presently come to? Who keeps them, or who ever did keep them? Thou art deceived, if thou thinkest that they are kept. If thou thinkest otherwise, thou thyself art at fault, either for decreeing things which would not be kept, or for winking at their violation.

Bernard then rehearses these papal decrees for the reformation of the clergy; salutary decrees, closely resembling those which had been promulgated a dozen times before, and were destined to be promulgated a dozen times again, up to the Reformation and beyond. He proceeds:

It is now more than three years since we heard this command [for the deprivation of obstinate offenders] proclaimed; but we have never yet had occasion to mourn for any cleric deprived of his benefice, or for any bishop suspended from his see. Yet something has ensued which merits the bitterest mourning; namely Impunity, that offspring of carelessness, that mother of indiscipline, that root of impudence and nurse of transgressions<sup>1</sup>.

Bishop Guillaume le Maire complained to the Council of Vienne (1311) of the armed resistance which monks sometimes offered to their visitors<sup>2</sup>. The complaint is fairly frequent that, "in these modern days"—i.e. the thirteenth or fourteenth or fifteenth century, as the case may be—ecclesiastics fear the sentence of excommunication far less than they fear a small money-fine<sup>3</sup>. We get a similar impression of frequent impotence from the Cluniac statutes of 1458<sup>4</sup>:

Whereas through negligence, omission, or contempt of these afore-said statutes—and especially because priors have neglected and do neglect to carry them away with them [from the Chapter General] and to publish them among their subjects, and to observe them and cause them to be observed—whereby many excesses, irregularities, damages, inconveniences, and scandals have often come about, to

<sup>1</sup> *De consid.* lib. iii, c. v, §§ 19, 20; compare *Epp.* pp. 79, 80.

<sup>2</sup> *Lib. Guil. Major.* p. 481.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 287 above.

<sup>4</sup> *Bib. Clun.* col. 1614 a.

the dishonour of the whole Order and of Religion, and such might still be committed—therefore, lest anyone henceforth should be able to pretext ignorance, all abbots priors and administrators are now bound to bring away full copies of the statutes from the General Chapter, and publish them among their subject brethren, and do what they can for their effective observance.

Let us compare these generalizations with a few concrete instances in chronological order. In about 1200 A.D., Stephen, bishop of Tournai, with the bishop of Arras and the abbots of St-Armand and St-Calixte, visited the great abbey of St-Martin-de-Tournai, which was notoriously in a bad state. The result is summed up in Stephen's 224th epistle. The abbot of St-Martin swore solemnly upon the Gospels that he would henceforth keep himself chaste, would follow the statutory Church services, and, as far as possible, the regular common life of the monastery, would keep his monks within their precincts, and not let the juniors go out to worldly spectacles or fairs or other festivities. But this oath was soon violated; in the next letter Stephen writes to the archbishop of Reims:

That monastery overflows outwardly with ignominy, and is inwardly void of discipline. Its ruler fears his monks more than they fear him; he not only fosters them in idle ease, but corrupts them by his pernicious example. There is no solid virtue in him, and no honesty to be seen; nothing is safe from his lust<sup>1</sup>. I have oftentimes rebuked, yet without correcting him; for his wound is incurable. He swore solemnly to obey my mandate and that of the bishop of Arras. The bishop pressed this mandate upon him; he refused obedience, perjured himself, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. By means of false letters forged at Tournai, whereof I have sent you a copy by the intermediary of the abbot of Aquicincti, he procured absolution, although the merest schoolboy—*puer elementarius*—might have perceived the falsity of those letters. Then, fearing for himself, he hath appealed through a certain young monk of ignominious report, whom he had made prior of his monastery; and, under cloak of this appeal, he is squandering and perverting all things.

The next letter is no less urgent; the abbot "is wasting and dissipating" all the goods of the monastery; by his appeal he may even compel Stephen to go to Rome<sup>2</sup>. Grosseteste, among

<sup>1</sup> "Nihil ejus ab inguine tutum." This is repeated in the next letter with a qualifying "ut dicitur."

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 211, coll. 496 ff.

his many battles for righteousness, had to contend with the great monastery of St-Benoît-sur-Loire, which sent its lecherous and disobedient monks to its conveniently distant English priory of Minting<sup>1</sup>. His younger contemporary Odo Rigaldi, finding that two nuns were living by themselves at the priory of Ste-Austreberte, proposed to suppress the cell and send these two back to the parent convent, "by reason of the perils and scandals which might proceed thence, and of what we had sometimes heard of the two nuns who dwelt there." But the prioress objected that "one of these was a scold, and she feared her disturbing the whole convent"; therefore, though the order was first given on Dec. 1, 1260, and repeated in 1261, Odo found them still disobeying him in 1264 (pp. 380, 419, 491).

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 30.

## CHAPTER XXI

### DISCIPLINE (2)

THE Cluniac visitations tell us the same tale; here is a batch from the year 1312:

At Oron-Ville there is no monk with the prior [the proper numbers here being a prior with 1 or 2 monks], because a certain Vincent, who was dwelling there, and who had been caught twice or thrice in a brothel by the officers of the countess of Fribourg—as the countess herself sent word by letter to the chamberlain's *locum-tenens*<sup>1</sup>—this Vincent, having received 20 florins from the prior for his expenses, in order that he might find himself a home elsewhere, by reason of his *infamia* [here], came back to Oron-Ville and set fire to a certain grange and a certain mill, as the prior says, who afterwards followed after him and found him at Münchenwyler [another Cluniac priory] and exposed the matter to the chamberlain's *locum-tenens*, who answered the said prior: "He is thine own monk; if he be such as thou sayest, take him as thy monk, and do what thou seest fit." Then this prior took the said monk away with him as a captive; and, when they were come to Lucens, the said monk departed and went away from the said place without the prior's knowledge, as he saith. Divine service, hospitality and almsgiving are not well kept up here; their possessions at Lucens and at Pont-de-Barges are held by the *avoués* of the said places, who say that they would gladly give them back [to the monks] if one monk would dwell in each of the houses, as was his wont<sup>2</sup>.

At Rüggsberg are 3 monks with a prior, and there should be 5, as the neighbouring priors say. They are building well there, but the prior is non-resident; divine service is negligently done; the [precious] stone [in the reliquary?] which was lost last year has been found, and the candelabrum in the church has been sufficiently amended. Because there is a monk called Ralph, *diffamatus* of in-

<sup>1</sup> Another incidental proof of the casual nature of these registers, in which this monk has not figured before.

<sup>2</sup> An indication of the decay which had set in everywhere. Priors of two or three had sunk to a single inmate; these single monks were forbidden by canon law; for that or other reasons, the house was abandoned and simply farmed out. Now the *avoués* interfere: *i.e.* the lay protectors, mostly hereditary as representing the original founders. These feel, as the author of *Piers Plowman* did, that the contract was bilateral, and that monks who cease to fulfil their obligations must cease to enjoy their emoluments.

continence, he is in bodily peril, by reason of the power of a certain woman's friends [*lacuna* in MS.]...

At Payerne are 12 monks in the cloister, and 5 are outside as obedientiaries to the lord abbot; one is named Peter of Fribourg, who last year was one of the obedientiaries and this year he turned, under oath, to brother Cono of Verdes; therefore he lives alone at Chaindon, where he is wasting [*destruit*] the woods; nor can the said Cono or the subprior, as they say, bring him back to the cloister. The house is ill governed and is being ruined [*destruitur*] both spiritually and temporally; its rights and jurisdictions and woods are ill kept. Moreover, the burghers of Payerne have appropriated the priory pastures, and have sold them for 7 years to other persons; the priory is in debt to the extent of 4000 pounds, as the disobedient<sup>1</sup> monks told us. The treasure of the church, the silver image of the B.V.M., the privileges, relics, and other letters of the said priory have been taken away from the church and dissipated by the said Cono, by the will and consent of the prior and the disobedient<sup>1</sup> monks; their Bible is pawned in the hands of the Lombards for £20 of Lausanne money and usury, from last Christmas year. So when we had come to this priory after dinner, the said Cono suggested to us to go forthwith to the chapterhouse, to perform our visitation, if it so pleased us; for he said he was busy elsewhere next day; but on the morrow we came to the chapterhouse at a fitting hour and time, yet the said Cono appeared not, nor did he minister to us directly or indirectly, but, all the time we dwelt at Payerne, we must needs live at our own cost, and procure our food and necessities. Neither almsgiving nor hospitality is ministered there, nor is silence kept, nor quiet, nor any order; moreover the prior of Romainmotier sent one of his monks, Henry by name, to celebrate [Mass] in the chapel at Payerne; and, when he had come to the bridge in the town, he was cast into the water by the said Cono's men, and they cast stones upon him to drown him; at length he escaped with the help of certain women washing clothes. The rest is in a good state.

Again, at Bacins no Mass has been celebrated for 11 years past, nor any divine service, as we were told by the prior of Romainmotier, who is procurator at Payerne...

At Lieu Dieu [near Besançon] there is no prior nor monk in residence; divine service is neglected there, except that a certain secular priest sometimes celebrates; the roofs are ill-covered; neither hospitality nor almsgiving is exercised; the house has no debts<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Sic* in text, *inobedientes*; but it looks as if we should read *ibi obedientes*—the monks who were there in "obedience"—i.e. by arrangement of their superiors.

<sup>2</sup> Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* pp. 293 ff.

This glimpse into the internal economy of a few small priories enables us to understand why St Bernard spoke of them as "synagogues of Satan"<sup>1</sup>; why Odo Rigaldi found so many of them decayed or extinct in his province; why, again, Gerson considered it one of the main problems of his time "to provide for the decayed priories wherein are only one or two Religious, often to their own scandal and that of other folk; for, when they go back to the [parent] cloister, they trouble the other brethren and profit nothing"<sup>2</sup>; and why his younger contemporary, the Dominican Nider, stigmatizes these dwellings of a couple of Religious outside the monastery as leading to implication in temporal affairs, dealings with women, and dislike of returning to community life in the cloister; thence proceed disobedience to superiors, neglect of the Rule, danger to chastity, and the vice of covetousness<sup>3</sup>. Yet the Register of Odo Rigaldi, the Cluniac records, and the *Collectanea Anglo-Premonstratensia* testify clearly to the large and increasing proportion of Religious who were thus living by twos or threes during the last three centuries of the Middle Ages.

The last of these three authorities gives occasional but very significant glimpses of resistance to an exceptionally capable and well-supported visitor. Bishop Redman, himself a Premonstratensian, found the monastery of Beauchief, in 1462, "under manifold defamation of notorious crimes, by the frequent outcry [of the neighbourhood]." By his enquiry, the abbot was "convicted of solemn perjury, waste of the goods, incontinence, rebellion, and very many other notorious crimes"<sup>4</sup>. Thereupon the offender "fled from the discipline of our Order, rising up against us with armed men and defensive weapons, swords and staves, under guidance of the Evil Spirit. . . with seven of his brethren who had conspired with him and were his companions in this apostasy." Redman was a strong visitor, and a new abbot was elected without delay; but, three months later, the late abbot was still litigating against him, though six of the seven rebels then made their peace with the authorities. Robert Bowland still remained contumacious; he was still in apostasy

<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* 254, § 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Opp.* vol. II, p. 641.

<sup>3</sup> *De Ref. Relig.* l. II, c. xx, p. 254.

<sup>4</sup> *Coll. Anglo-Prem.* vol. II, pp. 48-69.

in 1478 and in 1482, when he refused to give himself up for trial. Yet in 1488 and 1494 we find him licensed to dwell outside the monastery; only in 1500, at last, is he a cloistered priest again. It is very significant to follow the careers of some of the other seven rebels, and of others who are noted as apostate in the years immediately following. Robert Skipton, the ringleader, made his peace as we have seen; in 1478 he is *circator*, a responsible officer; about the same time, we find him as subprior; a few months later, he is apostate again, in company with one of the original seven and four others. Yet in 1482 he is again prior, and our last notice of him, in 1488, shows him still in that office. Another of the seven rebels, John Aston, is *circator* under Skipton's subpriorate, apostatizes again with him, is absent (apparently without leave) in 1491, serving a parish cure in 1494, and sacristan in 1500. Thomas Peyton, one of the six apostates of 1478, is subprior in 1497 and prior in 1500. Another of that batch, Robert Wolflet, is *circator* in 1497 and 1500. The natural inference here is that, as Redman's visitation-records show us plainly in other cases, there was great difficulty in finding really trustworthy brethren to fill even the important conventual offices. It is true that Redman seems sometimes to have been free in his use of the term "apostate," applying it to every absence from the monastery without permission, even for a few days. But, when he thus brands a brother formally on the monastic list, it is difficult to believe that he is not using the word in its ordinary sense, and that the men thus recorded had cast off, for a time at least, the main restraints of claustral discipline. Moreover, apostates appear so often in other records, both ecclesiastical and civil, that we cannot doubt of their frequency<sup>1</sup>. Dr Mode's monograph deals, it is true, with a specially turbulent period (1350-70); but he singles out this vagabondage as "the one outstanding feature," and names twenty-three monasteries, representing six different Orders, whose apostates he has met with in civil records<sup>2</sup>. In Italy

the statute of the podestà [of Florence], in 1325, provided that the abbot-general [of the Vallombrosans] should be allowed to keep

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Salter, *Aug. Chap.* pp. 62, 68, 73, 117, 147; and the evidence I have already given in Chapter XIII (p. 181). Gower speaks of the monks who fall into lechery and then apostatize, *Mirour*, l. 9132.

<sup>2</sup> *The Influence, etc.* p. 72.



seven armed attendants, and the abbot of San Salvi two, since this was advisable in order to coerce, punish and imprison disobedient and rebellious brethren [of their Order], and to keep guard over those who were imprisoned. In 1329, this right was withdrawn, we do not know why<sup>1</sup>.

It is often noted that a monastery has no adequate prison<sup>2</sup>; even where such existed, the temptation was great to get rid of an inconvenient subject by winking at his flight. Nothing more would then be heard of him, unless he became such a nuisance to the countryside that the outcry reached the ears of the authorities<sup>3</sup>.

Nor was the softer sex more amenable to discipline. When Boniface VIII published his famous bull *Periculoso* which, with its insistence upon strict claustration, was intended to be epoch-making in monastic history, and when Bishop Dalderby of Lincoln, within a short time after its promulgation, attempted to bring the nuns of Elstow into line with it,

certain of the nuns, disobedient to these injunctions, hurled the said statute at his back and over his head, and as well the prioress as the convent appeared to consent to those who threw it, following the bishop to the outer gate of the house and declaring unanimously that they were not content in any way to observe such a statute<sup>4</sup>.

Other convents opposed also at this same visitation. John of Ayton, less than a generation later, assures us that no human force could compel the nuns to keep this papal command, based upon the 66th chapter of the Benedictine Rule<sup>5</sup>. Other visitation-records give us similar glimpses of the attitude of the Religious towards prescriptions which, however clearly in consonance with the Rule or with papal or visitatorial statutes, happened to be inconvenient. At a visitation instituted by Cardinal Morton at Romsey nunnery in 1492, "Dame Joan Paten deposes... that the abbess said that, when the inquiry was finished, she would do as she had done before"<sup>6</sup>. In 1514 the prior of Walsingham said the same to his brethren with reference to the

<sup>1</sup> Davidsohn, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Salter, *l.c.* p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> When Grosseteste visited Dunstable in 1248, the cellarer, conscious of guilt and "fearing the bishop's austerity," ran away and joined the Cistercians (*Ann. Monast.* R.S. vol. III, p. 178).

<sup>4</sup> Power, *Nunneries*, p. 352, from *Lincoln Episc. Reg. Memo. Dalderby*, f. 10 d.

<sup>5</sup> Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, Appendix, p. 155.

<sup>6</sup> Liveing, p. 220.

bishop's impending visitation: "Do the best that ye can, and complain what ye will, it shall be never the better.... When my lord is gone, I shall rule and ask him none leave.... When my lord of Norwich is gone, I shall turn everything as I will." At Wymondham, on that same visitation, the prior was reported to have drawn a sword against Dom Richard Cambridge, and, on another occasion, "when he [R. C.] said that he would tell this to the lord bishop of Norwich, the said prior then answered and said: 'Tell my lord both, and my lady, for I care not'"<sup>1</sup>.

This section may be fitly concluded with a summary of the determined and long-successful resistance to reform at Nürnberg. In southern Germany, at least three important monasteries kept up the tradition of their Celtic origin, the so-called "Scottish" abbeys at Nürnberg, Regensburg and Würzburg. *Scotus*, at that time, was still applied indifferently to the Celts of Scotland and of Ireland, and it will be seen that the chronicler makes no distinction. He himself was a monk of the monastery, bearing the Celtic name of Colman and writing about 1604 A.D.<sup>2</sup> Coming to the fourteenth century, he proceeds:

As the times grew more and more evil, . . . the state of this monastery was seen to lapse from day to day into more disorders, so that it became utterly destitute of all observance of the Rule and, in the teeth of the prescriptions of the holy Fathers, was in many ways depraved by manifold vices and abuses, as will more clearly appear in the following words. For longer than the memory of man—nay, for a century and more until the year 1418, at the time of the Council of Constance, St Giles's abbey was so destitute of all Regular life that the abbots sometimes had no community, so that not even the canonical services were sung, and they came to such desolation that scarce any trace of a monastery could be observed. They made the chapterhouse into a chapel open to men and women; the infirmary was a lodging for secular priests; all the buildings were falling to ruin; all their rents and revenues were alienated; nor was claustral enclosure kept, but feasts were held there even for women, so that it became a proverb that the man who has lost his wife must seek her in the Scottish monastery. Wine was sold there as in a tavern. [At last, in 1411, the bishop of Bamberg not only] sent a monition to the abbot to amend his life<sup>3</sup> [but also put the finances of the abbey

<sup>1</sup> *Vis. Norwich*, pp. 99, 115, 117.

<sup>2</sup> Oefelius, vol. 1, pp. 342 ff.

<sup>3</sup> This formality of *monition* will assume great importance in my last volume, where we come to a discussion of the well-known St Albans case.

under control of a committee of laymen]; through whom things went better for a while in matters temporal. The second reform was that, in default of persons of the Scottish nation, they should take in eight monks from other Benedictine houses, or secular persons. As they could not get brethren, they took secular persons. Thirdly, that the abbot should send to Scotland and Ireland, at the cost of the abbey, to get recruits. Three unlearned youths were fetched, who remained but a little while. The [secular] priests began to live after the Scottish fashion—*Scotice*—with nightly guzzling and swilling—*commessionibus nocturnis*—so that they became unfit for celebrating divine service, wherefore friars supplied our services. Hence the complaints of honest folk went up again to the bishop of Bamberg, that a worse deformation and degradation of the abbey's state had ensued. [He therefore sent more than seven distinguished ecclesiastics, one of whom was to become archbishop of Riga.] These decreed, for a beginning of reform, that thenceforward six Benedictine monks and three novices should live there. They sent to [the reformed abbeys of] Castel and Reichenbach and others; but these refused, on account of the evil fame of the Scots. At last three brethren were sent from Neuburg near Fulda, to whom the bishop and his coadjutor Hermann and Abbot Maurice gave power to reform in detail; and one of these, Berthold, was made prior. Yet the abbot wrote again to Scotia for monastic brethren. Four came from Ireland and joined those of Fulda, saying that they had not come for the sake of abstinence, but for abundance' sake and freedom to live after their own will, as the messenger reported. One, named Shane, departed with curses on the third day; another, Thady [*i.e.* Teague] stayed two months. The third, Donnell, was sent to Kastel for instruction in regular observance; he came back to St Giles's and stole the abbot's book and seal, with which he made letters of licence, and died on the road three days later. The fourth, named Gorman, remained, without [following the monastic] observance, until the death of Maurice; then he returned to Scotia and came to a sudden end. Thus for five years these monks of Fulda dwelt there for reform's sake, in great perils and molestation from the rest. The abbot and his friends sat at their feasts, while the rest sang divine service. Though his superiors sent him monitions to bow to reform, he relied upon the counsels of the abbots of Regensburg and Würzburg and began to invoke the help of the secular arm against the bishop of Bamberg [with the result that the Burgrave and the Margrave his brother both interfered in the sinner's favour, to the scandal of the bishop and the citizens of Nürnberg. The reformed brethren, seeing this at the end of all their labours and persecutions, went back to Fulda. In 1416, the bishop sent another strong commission, who] found the abbey miserably fallen. Considering the vocation of the brethren from Ireland to

be invalid, they persuaded them to accept the proper observance; but they did everything to machinate against it, although almost all their possessions were in pawn. [Therefore these new reformers decreed that the abbey was to be given to] Benedictines, living according to the Rule, of whatsoever nation they might be; and, if Scots wished to live with the same regularity, and were fit persons, that they should be received. This ordinance was denounced as unjust by the abbots of Nürnberg, Regensburg and Würzburg, who besought King Sigismund to send the bishop of Bamberg a writ to stay proceedings.

Sigismund referred the matter to the Ecumenical Council of Constance; the three Scottish abbots for a while defied the Council, but he of Nürnberg was compelled at last to accept reformation in 1418. The new monks found only two books left in the whole library, and had to borrow vestments from the friars when they made processions. It took thirty years of strenuous work, with the citizens' help, to bring buildings and observance to decency again.

We can thus see how the indiscipline which is occasionally conspicuous among the less abundant documents of earlier centuries shows no sign of abatement as time goes on. When we shall come to look more closely into this fifteenth century, we shall find yet more remarkable cases in the narratives of the visitors themselves; and we shall understand why Nider, with all his zeal and practical experience, felt bound to argue against his more optimistic contemporaries: "certain simple folk, who believe that the Church, which is grievously decayed in almost every particular, can be entirely reformed by a single General Council"<sup>1</sup>. For, as he has written just above,

"it would perhaps be impossible for all the good men who are in any Order to reform that other part [of their own Order], even though they would"; "there are very many Orders in whose monasteries there flourishes scarcely any of the old Regular observance, and vices have become so multiplied, transgressions and abuses are so great, that it does not seem humanly possible to reform and remove all these things at once."

This is one of the most significant indications revealed by the records, that even staunch reformers became notably discouraged.

<sup>1</sup> *De Ref.* l. II, c. xiii, p. 219. Nider, himself a Dominican, is writing especially of monastic reform in the mid-fifteenth century.

Their office was sometimes extremely invidious. There was a passage in Gratian's *Decretum*, taken from St Cyprian's epistles, which warranted the treatment of suspected nuns after a fashion repugnant to modern ideas, and even to a good many minds in the thirteenth century<sup>1</sup>. Matthew Paris accuses the great Grosseteste of indecorous zeal in pressing unwelcome enquiries among the nuns; and certainly Abbot Ambrose of Camaldoli was ready, though only in the last resort, to take his cue from Gratian. We shall see, in my last volume, how ingeniously the criminous or suspected nun might turn the tables on her visitor, and what meticulous circumspection Busch recommends in these matters.

The visitor's position, therefore, however inexpugnable legally, was often very precarious in practice; and the greatest men may be found confessing discouragement. We have already seen how the efficient English provincial of the Franciscans, even in the earliest and purest days of the Order, and in this province of exceptionally regular observance, "said that, after a visitation, he needed to sport awhile in order that he might get rid of the memory of what he had heard"<sup>2</sup>. Adam Marsh, in this same generation, refused to go as visitatorial coadjutor to the archbishop of Canterbury, because of

this atrocious murder of souls, stupendous beyond all other ages, which, alas! has hitherto been the regular result; seeing that, if I were present in person, what with the authority of [papal] provisions, or metropolitan jurisdiction, or the rights of patrons, I should see the Church of God continually scattered abroad, His sanctuary profaned, His Son trodden under foot, the Blood of the Testament defiled, the care of Christ's flocks given to men who will never care for them, men idle and impious and perverse, who will devastate them and despoil and betray, urged on by the devilish rage of most atrocious fury. If I am there, and protest against these abominable sights, yet these wicked cruelties will none the less be perpetrated; if, again, I wink and hold my peace, then I shall deserve death, which God forbid!<sup>3</sup>

Attendance at the archbishop's court is deadly work—*lethalis*—except in so far as "this grievous life is supported by the pleasant help of some [like-minded Franciscan] companion"<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Mon. Fra.* R.S. p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 336 (to be read in connexion with Ep. clxxxii).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 369.

It was Grosseteste's quarrel with the monks of Canterbury over visitation matters, though in a very different context, which impelled him to remark (as Matthew Paris records under the year 1243): "I do not desire that the monks pray otherwise for my soul [than by launching these excommunications against me]—no, not to all eternity!" The same great prelate, in his sermon before the pope and the Council of Lyons, complained that the bishop who wished to visit and correct his flock found such general difficulties put in his way, especially through appeals to higher courts, that "he will perhaps grow so weary of his task, that even life becomes a burden to him"<sup>1</sup>. And, in the case of the hundreds of exempt monasteries, these difficulties are enormously increased; we have seen his complaint in Chapter XVII. Pecham, again, in 1284, writes despairingly to the bishop of Lincoln; there has been a scandal in a nunnery, and "we are aware that, in these days, women's minds shrink less from false oaths and the bond of excommunication [for perjury] than from the shame of revealed guilt"; his experience as a visitor severely tries his religious faith<sup>2</sup>. The present position is intolerable; visitors are so often met by contradictory papal privileges and by unworthy foreigners thrust upon them by the popes, and by frivolous appeals to the Roman court, that "their minds are unnerved."

I know for certain that many things are left uncorrected by many men—nay, countless things—through despair of attaining the proper goal, and for fear lest those revenues, which suffice not for almsgiving to all the [needy] poor, should be spent on [litigation against] these reprobates.

Some day, there must come a revolt against all this<sup>3</sup>. Later, he is still more explicit (p. 822). He asks a friend in Rome to remonstrate with the pope against an appeal in the interests of a guilty monk, and adds: "I would have you know for certain that, if I had foreboded the grievances which I daily experience, and no hope of remedy for them, but oftentimes trouble from the quarter from whence I hoped for help, I would never have bent my feeble shoulders to take this load upon my back."

<sup>1</sup> E. Brown, *Fascic.* vol. II (1690), p. 256; cf. p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> *Epp.* p. 729; for other difficulties of his position, see pp. 351, 518.

<sup>3</sup> *Epp.* R.S. pp. 694-7.

Dom Berlière has noted, what must strike any careful student of the original records, how many monastic superiors in these days resigned their functions: it will suffice to quote a few concrete cases. Among the letters of St Hildegard, at least sixteen are to abbots or conventual superiors who wanted to resign their offices, and to whom she counselled continuance as the only courageous and unselfish course. If, as has been suggested, this collection is not entirely genuine, but contains certain later letters, this does not destroy their value as evidence that the resignation of pious abbots was a common phenomenon of the time<sup>1</sup>. In 1234, the great abbey of Gembloux was "deformed both in temporal and in spiritual matters"; the new abbot, "attempting to reform the monastery, was so harassed [by his monks] with contumely and oppressed with injustices that he was compelled to resign his office"; and his successor had to appeal for help from Rome<sup>2</sup>. The future Hadrian IV was practically driven out of the monastery of St Rufus at Avignon by his rebellious monks<sup>3</sup>. William of Hoo, prior of Rochester in the thirteenth century, "suffered much persecution," finally abdicating to become a simple monk at Woburn. Abbot Theobald of Loos (1351-5), "voulut rendre à l'abbaye son ancienne ferveur, mais ses bonnes intentions n'eurent d'autre résultat que de lui attirer la haine des religieux." His next successor but one had the same experience<sup>4</sup>. Finally, let us take a case from the Swiss archives just before the Reformation, told in the words of the historian Hottinger.

John, abbot of Wettingen, was bidden by the president of the Cistercian Order to see that all should be reformed in the nunnery of Frauenthal. The abbot excused himself on this plea among others, that only seven priests were now left in his own monastery, one of whom had been condemned to perpetual imprisonment under the suspicion that, in 1507, he had burned the monastery to the ground; since when he had escaped and was maintained by the abbot of Aurora; he had striven to bring him (Abbot John) before the court of the Swiss Confederacy [presumably for false imprisonment] but had been refused a hearing. Further, Abbot John pleaded that he had already the supervision of 4 nunneries, a labour from which he

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 197, coll. 1355-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Reg. Greg. IX*, ed. Auvray, pp. 972-4.

<sup>3</sup> Gul. Neubrig. ed. Hearne, vol. 1, p. 121.

<sup>4</sup> De Rosny, pp. 62, 65.

would gladly be excused. To which he added—"I abhor these nuns [of Frauenthal], since divers prelates of greater reputation and better qualified than myself, one after the other, have given up the attempt to reform them. I dare not report what things some folk relate concerning them; would that they were chaste, regular, and honest! I fear they have asked for me to rule them because they know me for a simple man," etc. At length, seeing that he himself and his own monks need reformation, he pleads for the mercy of Jesus Christ that such a reformation be brought about; "but for which I fear the ruin not only of my monastery but also of their souls." How far he himself was in earnest, we may well doubt; for in 1514 we find the president of the Order, James abbot of Cîteaux in the diocese of Châlons, warning this abbot of Wettingen: "It hath been declared to us for many years past, by many trustworthy persons, both lay and ecclesiastical, that your monastery of Wettingen is daily devastated and is almost verging on ruin—*quasi ad interitum tendere*—both spiritually and temporally." This, he says, flows from a double source; first, the *irreligiosa vita*, the evil conduct of abbot and monks; secondly, the lack of visitation, since he and his community refused to be visited. Wherefore this abbot James commanded the abbots of Cappel and St Urban that, considering the evil state of Wettingen, with other Cistercian monasteries of both sexes in Switzerland, they should visit at the end of a year all which had not been visited in the meanwhile, and bring their abbots, abbesses, etc. to better order<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore Alvarus Pelagius, naturally enough, reckons as two of the main defects of abbots that they neglect to punish runaway monks and that they spare incorrigible brethren out of regard for their powerful friends. Then, coming to "the more detestable" among "the commoner crimes" of "the monks of our times," he writes:

First, that they conspire against the abbot who would fain correct them, and procure his deposition and the institution of some other who answers to their own morals, and who has no power left, since he began in subjection to the monks... Secondly, that they conspire not only for his deposition, but also for his death or murder<sup>2</sup>.

His older contemporary, the bishop of Mende, applies to that age the complaint of St Jerome, that one cause of social and political suffering was in the priestly authorities who, "wishing to seem kindly towards delinquents, and fearing lest their penitents should speak ill of them, forget their priestly severity"<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Hottinger, vol. II, p. 564.

<sup>2</sup> F. 130 (lib. II, artt. xxiii, xxiv).

<sup>3</sup> Durandus, pars III, tit. 49, p. 332.



The Benedictine General Chapter Acts of 1343, amid their records of many visitations prescribed by the Chapter of 1340, but never carried out during these three years, disclose one fact of deep significance: "The abbot of Croyland began to visit, but did not finish by reason of the impunity"—*incepisse visitare et non perfecisse propter impunitatem*<sup>1</sup>. It is just possible to read into these words "because so many of his fellow-visitors left their work undone, and yet were not fined as by statute they should have been." This same entry shows that their fines were "held over," which in the Middle Ages was generally a lenient phrase for remission. But it is far more probable that the abbot was discouraged from farther procedure by the impossibility of exacting due penalties from the guilty among his visitands. Bishop Redman, an unusually strong visitor, had to beseech the abbot-general at Prémontré not to entertain the complaints of "certain runaway canons of our English province, who apostatize and come fraudulently to you for the sake of getting something or of making some complaint under no matter what pretext"<sup>2</sup>. The Cistercian visitors of about 1480 write in despair to the abbot of Cîteaux<sup>3</sup>:

The wickedness of men is so increased in these days, that we can fulfil scarce anything of what we should wish, or little at best, without great labour, grievous expense, and intolerable trouble from worldly persons. For nowadays perverse monks are corrected with the greatest difficulty, and the wiles of the wicked in our Order grow from day to day, so that they flee from regular correction to the defence of powerful folk.

Especially has the guilty abbot of Warden appealed to worldly help against the visitors:

despising our ordinances, [he and his monks] returned to their old ways; and the abbot, in defence of his own wickedness, had recourse to a certain famous knight with whom, before his abbacy, he had lived many years outside the Order, and to whose wealth and power he owed his promotion, in spite of his insufficiency in learning and morals.

There has been an attempted murder; the visitors cannot reform

<sup>1</sup> Reynerus, App. III, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Coll. Anglo-Prem. vol. I, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> Bib. Dijon, MSS. de Cîteaux, liasse *Correspondance* 1478-1628—*Abbates Coniuncti*. Another (or the same?) case of attempted murder is dealt with in the bundle labelled *Joh. Abbas de Warden*, 1492 A.D.

the rebellious brethren without help from the central authority. About the same time, the abbot of Cîteaux himself complained to the French government concerning the indiscipline of the Orders in general. Not only prelates, but "simple Religious, even Mendicants," appeal against their merited punishments;

by reason whereof, many father-abbots and visitors, who cannot maintain such expense [as to fight the matter in the courts], and especially those who have a great number of subjects, are often constrained to dissemble and, trusting to God's mercy, to wait patiently for some other day when God will deign to mend this; which is a horrible pity<sup>1</sup>.

Dionysius Carthusianus, a contemporary, writes: "Alas, alas! how many in holy Religion lose their souls and perish everlastingly!" The common herd, because they break the Rule, and their superiors, because they permit these infractions "through carnal and worldly fear, lest they be expelled from their place and deposed from their office"<sup>2</sup>. Geiler of Kayserberg, when his friend Christoph v. Utenheim was made bishop of Bâle (1502), "wondered that he should give up his anachoretic life and accept a bishopric, since in these days there is no chance left of keeping the clergy in discipline"<sup>3</sup>.

Moreover, while one section of society deplored this relaxation of discipline and prophesied disaster from it, another section accepted it as an inevitable concomitant of that progressive deterioration of mankind which passed almost as an incontestable truism among medieval thinkers. Whatever may be said of nineteenth-century optimism and blind belief in progress, we may set against this a still more settled pessimism in the Middle Ages, and a still more consistent belief in retrogression, so far as this present life is concerned. Therefore it became a commonplace that "modern" monks are physically unable to bear the full burden of a Rule which has been composed for robuster and more religious ancestors; not only shall we see the Benedictine General Chapter in England appealing to this as an incontrovertible fact, but an outside authority like Pavinus argues from it that fifteenth-century visitors must necessarily permit relaxations which their predecessors would legitimately have punished<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Analecta Gallicana*, vol. II, p. 345.

<sup>2</sup> *Opp.* vol. XVI, p. 494.

<sup>3</sup> Riegger, p. 423.

<sup>4</sup> *Tract. Juris*, vol. XIV, f. 127, § 114.

## CHAPTER XXII

### PUNISHMENT (1)

THIS subject has already been anticipated, to a considerable extent, in some of the quotations. If the public became increasingly critical, and if orthodox reformers were more and more discouraged, this was due even less to the frequency of offences than to the total or comparative impunity of the offenders. The bravest are discouraged when they find themselves pouring water into a sieve. This, as we saw in Chapter xx, is no merely modern point of view; modern life differs from medieval not in the stress which we lay upon reasonable punishment as a deterrent from crime, but in the extent to which social conditions enable us to practise what has been preached for thousands of years. And, in fact, the paramount importance of this question of punishment has been recognized by modern writers who start from widely different points of view. Three, at least, have claimed explicitly, in defence of medieval monasticism, that its discipline is justified by the recorded regularity and efficiency of its punishments. Not one of them has offered real documentary vouchers for this sweeping generalization, but the claim in itself is most significant; it shows an instinctive recognition of this question of punishment as a criterion: so far, all students are on common ground, and we can safely proceed to take the witness of contemporary records.

The documents vaguely appealed to in support of this contention are contained in three well-known collections: the Exeter registers, the Norwich visitations, and the Anglo-Premonstratensian records. Yet, in fact, the first of these shows how powerless even an exceptionally strong prelate might be against an obstinate criminal. The second presents us with thirty-three Religious accused by their fellows of incontinence, yet Bishop Nicke is recorded to have inflicted only two punishments; in one of these cases, a nun thus expiates her lapse: "That she should sit for a whole month below all the other nuns, and should repeat during that period the psalter seven times over"<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For references here see Appendix 32.

As to the third, out of the seventy-five serious offences recorded in this collection of documents, eighteen were wiped out by frivolous penances such as a single recitation of the Psalter, which at the very best, would depend entirely upon the criminal's own conscience. Of the other offenders, thirty-eight were labelled on the spot with banishment to other monasteries; yet, in twenty-eight of these cases, the punishment was remitted within an hour or two, even before the visitor had left the house. In some of the other nineteen cases, subsequent records show that this nominal punishment was never inflicted; some of the worst offenders were actually promoted to higher offices, and two of them to abbacies<sup>1</sup>. These facts emerge unmistakably under any searching analysis of the actual documents, and I have pointed them out at different times. It will suffice, therefore, that I repeat them briefly here, as essential to clear the ground for a discussion of the actual medieval evidence; but in Appendix 32 I reprint the exact details as they were printed in 1915, and as they have passed without contradiction for these eleven years.

It is very seldom that our records, as in these Premonstratensian visitations, are continuous enough to enable us to trace with any certainty what penalties were decreed, and how far these were carried out. But we may find throughout the Middle Ages, and in all countries, abundant evidence that impunity, absolute or comparative, was rather normal than exceptional. This is not peculiar to Church discipline or the Church courts; everywhere the authorities had to content themselves with a very small fraction of their nominal control; and the present state of things in America under Prohibition, granting it to be as bad as the most enthusiastic adversaries represent, would be far less irregular than what we should find everywhere throughout the best-governed of European states, if we could go back five or six hundred years<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Richard Ralston and John Newynnton; their record will be found briefly summarized here in Appendix 32.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Mr Hudson's introduction to his Selden Society volume on the Norwich Leet Courts, and, for Florence, Davidsohn, vol. iv, pp. 116, 322. These facts must seriously affect our estimate of such a book as Löhr's otherwise valuable monograph on the Xanten lists of fines, and of the similar monograph by the same author from which Störmann (pp. 271-2) quotes with approval. Löhr proves that the books record fines for

Early legislation, it is true, was severe against monastic or clerical incontinence; and, for the worst offences, we find perpetual prison decreed as late as 1274, if not later, by the Cistercian statutes<sup>1</sup>. These prisons, again, in the earlier days especially, were sometimes cruel and unmerciful, the penitent being left to lie in darkness, cold, filth and solitude<sup>2</sup>. Mabillon has collected the evidence in his *Réflexions sur les Prisons des Ordres Religieux*<sup>3</sup>. But there is no evidence that these worst cruelties were mainly inflicted as a punishment for the worst moral offences; on the contrary, there is every reason to believe that Mabillon's most startling instances (from Languedoc in 1350, p. 325) refer to the systematic persecution of "Spiritual" Franciscans by their relaxed brethren, to whom the strict observance of the Rule by the Spirituals was a rebuke and an offence<sup>4</sup>. But one point emerges clearly from Mabillon's collections, that monastic prisons were occasionally so extreme in their inhumanity as to give excuse for contrary extremes of indulgence; just as the inhumanity of English gallows-laws in 1800 was the direct cause of innumerable acquittals for theft. Mabillon, while writing solely from the point of view of humanity towards the culprit, shows incidentally how difficult it was for the monastery to keep a prisoner for any length of time, and how almost impossible to imprison him for life. He writes (pp. 328-33):

Mais quand ils seroient veritablement touchez de la douleur de unchastity for from 2 per cent. to 7 per cent. of the clergy, in a large archdeaconry of Rhineland, taking the best and the worst year as specimens; but other evidence warns us against taking these lists of fines as an exhaustive record of offences actually discovered.

<sup>1</sup> *Winter. Cist.* vol. III, p. 234 (1273). "*Item, cum super illo vicio indicibili clamor multiplex et indecens aures Capituli pluries pulsaverit,*" the offender is to be deprived of his habit, according to the decree of 1266. Next year, "*quia pro vicio indicibili plures sunt carceri mancipandi. . . semper in carcere maneat.*"

<sup>2</sup> At Hirschau, under St William's strict reforms (11th cent.) it was a pit without door or window, into which men descended by a ladder. (Herrgott, *Vet. Disc. Mon.* p. 483.) For other evidence see my first volume, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> In his *Ouvrages posthumes*, tom. II (1724), pp. 321 ff.

<sup>4</sup> There is a case in *Reg. Rad. Salop.* p. 114 (1332), where the bishop has heard that the convent of Bath is keeping one of its monks in a prison so cruel that it endangers his life. But here, again, there is nothing to show that the cruelty does not come rather from personal enmity than from moral indignation; Leach's generalization is certainly true in the main, that the graver moral offences were far less strictly punished than "contumacy" or revealing the secrets of the community to outsiders (*Vis. Southwell*, C.S. p. lxxv).

leurs crimes, quelle tête pourroit soutenir pendant plusieurs mois, pendant des années entières, et même quelquefois pendant plusieurs années, la pensée et la douleur de ses péchez, sans qu'enfin elle vienne à tourner?... De là vient aussi que l'on voit si peu de fruit des prisons et des pénitences que les Supérieurs imposent à ceux qui tombent; et que ces pauvres infortunez perdent bien souvent ou la tête, ou toute sensibilité; en un mot qu'ils deviennent ou foux, ou endurcis, ou désesperez: c'est de quoi il est bien aisé de donner des exemples... On dira peut-être que l'on n'observe pas d'ordinaire à la rigueur ces Sentences: que les premiers Supérieurs sont toujours en droit de les modérer: et cette sévérité apparente n'est que pour donner de la terreur aux autres, qui seroient disposez à commettre les mêmes fautes. Je répons que tout cela n'empêche pas qu'une Sentence outrée ne soit toujours outrée: que le seul prononcé de telles Sentences est capable de jeter dans le désespoir un coupable, ou de l'endurcir, ou de luy faire tourner la tête en voyant qu'on le traite avec la dernière rigueur... On ne peut pas toujours méditer et lire; il faut avoir quelque autre exercice pour délasser l'esprit. Mais que des gens, qui sont d'ailleurs accablez de chagrin et de tristesse, puissent demeurer durant un long tems dans une étroite prison, toujours occupez dans la lecture ou dans la méditation, sans autre exercice, c'est ce que l'on ne pourra jamais me persuader se pouvoir faire sans miracle.... Car une prison sans occupation est encore plus capable de les entretenir dans leur endurcissement.... Si une année ne suffit pas pour corriger un Religieux, plusieurs années ne serviront qu'à le rendre pire. Il y a d'autres pénitences plus utiles et plus humiliantes que la prison... On dit à cela, que si on ne les renferme pas pour plusieurs années ou pour toujours, ils retourneront dans leurs premiers égaremens, et sortiront du monastère. Mais il vaut encore mieux que cela arrive, que d'en faire des fous ou des désesperez.

Mabillon is here speaking specially of the very strictest form of monastic imprisonment, but his suggestions for positive remedies show very clearly how great a burden would be thrown upon the abbot and the brethren by any system which would enforce the necessary constraint upon a difficult subject without hardening him against the punishment or driving him to despair. Taking the example of St John Climacus for his text, Mabillon sketches a system of penitential cells so arranged as to be compatible with reading, with useful work and society, and the hearing of Mass. But he confesses this to be somewhat Utopian: "Je ne doute pas que tout ceci ne passe pour une idée d'un nouveau monde; mais quoi qu'on en dise ou qu'on en pense, il

sera facile, lorsque l'on voudra, de rendre ces prisons et plus utiles et plus supportables."

What was avowedly difficult under the France of Louis XIV would have been almost impossible in the Middle Ages; many monasteries had no regular prison, and those, probably, were the houses which most needed one. A fair idea of such prisons at their best may be formed from those for the criminous clergy which still survive at Sens, and are regularly shown to visitors of that splendid archiepiscopal palace. The foundations of the prison at Fountains Abbey may be seen, but nobody seems to have attempted to decipher the prisoners' inscriptions on its walls before they became wholly illegible. Davidsohn shows how, even in Florence, one of the most civilized of all medieval cities, the prison problem seemed almost insoluble; and thus, incidentally, what special difficulties beset monastic discipline. The strictest among the Orders in Tuscany were the reformed Benedictines grouped round Vallombrosa:

the statute of the [Florentine] podestà prescribed, in 1325, that the Abbot General [of Vallombrosa] should be allowed to keep seven armed attendants, and the abbot of San Salvi two, since these were needed for the repression of disobedient and rebellious brethren, and for punishing them and imprisoning them and guarding the prisoners. In 1329, for what reason we know not, this right was withdrawn<sup>1</sup>.

Here, then, we must be prepared to find even more than the usual startling medieval contrasts between the extremes of severity and of laxity. In 743, the Council of Lestines decreed:

If any of the servants of God or handmaidens of Christ fall into fornication, let him do penance on bread and water in prison. If he be ordained priest, let him remain two years in prison, and be scourged first; if a cleric or monk fall into this sin, let him be thrice scourged and then do penance for a year in prison. Let veiled nuns likewise be held to the same punishment, and let all the hair of their head be shaven.

In the case of priests, during all our present period, it was decreed that the faithful should refuse their Masses when the sin was "notorious," but this was soon stultified by jesuitical glosses which demanded for "notoriety" such a mass of evidence

<sup>1</sup> *Gesch. v. Florenz*, vol. iv, p. 343. Was it not that here, as in so many other places, the struggle was given up as hopeless?

as, in the nature of the case, was seldom forthcoming. It was even decreed, more than once, that the children of priests should be reduced to slavery; and a distinguished bishop pleaded before the Ecumenical Council of Vienne (1311) that this ancient decree should be strictly enforced as a safeguard against growing immorality<sup>1</sup>. Far more business-like, in conception, were the very numerous conciliar decrees for the deprivation of concubinary priests; but, as St Bonaventura complained in about 1270, if this were enforced in practice, where could better men be found to fill these sinners' places<sup>2</sup>? Two and a half centuries later, in his sermon before Convocation, Colet made practically the same point; it was not fresh laws that were needed for clerical discipline, but simply that the old laws should be treated as realities. The vast mass of medieval legislation on this subject testifies mainly to its own inadequacy. Here and there, in the palmy days, we find a prelate strong enough to make a great example, as when Abbot Samson pulled down that building at Bury which had been the scene of the sacristan's transgressions, or when Abbot Godfrey of Vendôme, in about 1098, ordered the demolition of a chamber in a French priory for the same reason<sup>3</sup>. But it would be far more difficult to find a similar example within the period covered by this present volume. The two instances of strict punishment in earlier times, quoted by the editor to illustrate Stephen of Tournai's letters, do but emphasize the contrast with Stephen's own times (about 1170 A.D.) when this energetic bishop contents himself with seeking to secure the removal of sinners, and breathes no word of actual punishment as a deterrent to others<sup>4</sup>.

For this was one of the worst confessions of weakness, and one of the main causes which made comparative impunity chronic, that it was difficult to find any penalty more effective than banishment. We have seen how St Bonaventura and Odo Rigaldi, leading friars of that generation in which the friars had set out to reform the world, were constantly obliged to content themselves with merely papering over the cracks in those ancient walls of the Church which it was their life's work

<sup>1</sup> For full references see *The Medieval Village*, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> *Quare FF. Min. praedient.*

<sup>3</sup> Jocelin of Brakelond, C.S. p. 23; Mabillon, *Annales*, vol. v, p. 373.

<sup>4</sup> P.L. vol. 211, col. 426, n. 44; cf. coll. 319-20.



to maintain<sup>1</sup>. That was the necessary policy everywhere; Caesarius of Heisterbach gives us an example from about the time when Odo began his work at Rouen. A priest (apparently in Germany) having learned in confession certain secret sins of his benefactress, tempted her to fornication; he attempted to break down her refusal with the threat of revealing her confession; and, since she persisted, he made good his threat. The lady fled to another priest, confessed and was absolved by him, and was then able "sufficiently to purge herself"—*i.e.* to deny her guilt, since it had now been wiped away. The villainy was thus frustrated; yet Caesarius seems to feel poetic justice fully satisfied when he adds "and the accuser was banished from that province"<sup>2</sup>. This was also the general monastic policy for the gravest offences. Imprisonment (even where the monastery had a prison) was onerous and wearisome to the community as well as to the culprit<sup>3</sup>; the temptation to shift the whole burden elsewhere, and merely to pay for the exile's board and lodging in some other house, was overwhelming. This was especially so in the great monasteries, which had a number of dependent cells. Pierre Dubois, in 1307, complained to the pope that "many young monks are quarrelsome, and deliberately so, in the cloister, in order that they may be sent to such [dependent] priories, for the sake of wandering abroad and living wantonly"<sup>4</sup>. Archbishop Winchelsey, in 1303, complained that the small priory of Colne, a cell to Abingdon, was being ruined in discipline; one cause was that the abbot of Abingdon was utilizing this cell

for the punishment of delinquents, who would be far better and more effectually corrected and punished in the said abbey of Abingdon than in this cell of Colne, where they would have less to fear. For it seemeth indecent and unjust that this cell, which of old was called the infirmary to Abingdon, should now be styled a prison and should be used for the punishment of delinquents<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See also Appendix 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Dial. Mirac.* vol. 1, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Alvarus Pelagius tells us that "few Religious, after they have been imprisoned for this crime [of incontinence], remain in the Order, since they are ashamed and confounded": therefore "many apostasies come about" (l. 11, art. 73, f. 243 b).

<sup>4</sup> *De Recuperatione*, § 32 (ed. Langlois, p. 25).

<sup>5</sup> *Reg. Baldock*, Cant. and York Soc. p. 77.

A Canterbury annalist records how, in the early fifteenth century, three of the cathedral monks were thus sent to cells. Two were banished "for reasons which it is better to pass in silence than to write anything thereof," "for reasons which must not be spoken of"<sup>1</sup>. Many maintained that the third suffered the vengeance of heaven as having unjustly accused the two others, but in any case, these three cases illustrate the common practice of expelling monks from the parent house and quartering them upon one of the cells. It is in this same generation that we get one of our most interesting glimpses of this system, from the Provincial Chapter of the English Benedictines held in 1444. Two of the decrees of that chapter run as follows:

Lest prelates be convicted of hatred towards those whom they are commanded to love, or lest they seem to wish to avenge their own wrongs, we decree that prelates send no man from the parent house to any cell, or from any cell to another, through any spark of indignation or hatred of any kind; but, on the contrary, let them send to the cells, after the sincere judgement of their conscience, such as have been suspected of vices which tend to the ill-report of the Order, and those who bear themselves disorderly therein; and let the prelate do this after consultation with the brethren, and by assent of the senior part thereof, unless he have a privilege to the contrary. *Item*, we decree that the monk who is banished from one house to another, or who is committed to prison, shall have a breviary or some book wherein he may read the divine service, notwithstanding this abuse that those who are sent to a cell say no canonical hours on the journey, for want of a book, but, when they have come to the cells, then they find a book and seek to offer to God the service which they were bound to say before<sup>2</sup>.

From such notices as this we should learn, even if we did not surmise it *a priori* as practically certain in human nature, that this system involved two serious—it may almost be said, fatal—disadvantages; it did not suit the enforced guests, and it did not suit the hosts. Therefore both sides resisted, and often with success; probably this is why Redman so frequently stultified himself, by revoking his sentences of banishment within a few hours, or even minutes, of their pronouncement.

The Cistercians, in their early days, had used this punishment

<sup>1</sup> Searle, *Cant.* pp. 184 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Reynerus, *App.* p. 132.

with some real success, but there, even from the first, the central authority had to use its power to force these unwelcome guests upon communities which had enough to do to save themselves. Moreover, it was easier to send a sinner forth from the precincts of his own house than to ensure his knocking in due time at the other gate assigned to him. A decree of the Council of Salzburg, in 1274, condemns the "evil custom" whereby abbots, instead of punishing their sinners where the sin was wrought, got rid of them in this way, "seeing that such men, when sent to other monasteries, do not mourn their offences, but rather wander dissolutely abroad"<sup>1</sup>. A Cistercian General Chapter statute of 1329 complains that, in some cases, the guilty cloisterers never arrive at their "remote" destination, but stay contentedly at some other house on their way, where the abbots, "contemning the statutes of our holy Rule. . . to the damage of their own soul's health and to the ruin of regular discipline" allow them to remain. Many a jovial and pleasant sinner might thus ingratiate himself; on the other hand, there were many more who knocked at no abbey gate, but simply cast the frock to the nettles and drifted off to prey upon society. "Melancholy," wrote Caesarius of Heisterbach as early as 1250, "makes many go off into apostasy"<sup>2</sup>. Later Cistercian chapter-records indicate that many of the expelled offenders never reached their destination<sup>3</sup>. Traces of these men and women meet us in every sort of medieval record. Primarily, of course, in General Chapter records<sup>4</sup>, in the statutes of the different Orders, and in papal decrees; a conspectus of these last, mainly for the mendicants, may be found in *Privilegia*, pp. 53 ff., with references at the head of the chapter to many others scattered elsewhere in the book. We there find the popes seriously concerned with Franciscan apostates at different times between 1245 and 1267 (that is, in the lifetime of St Bonaventura and of Odo Rigaldi), with several repetitions afterwards. Other decrees date from 1294 (Celestines; repeated 1304 and 1434); 1374 (Dominicans); 1434 (Reformed Benedictines); 1462 (Franciscans); 1476 (Carme-

<sup>1</sup> Hartzheim, *Conc. Germ.* vol. III, p. 640.

<sup>2</sup> Caes. *Hom.* pars I, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Martène, *Thes.* vol. IV, an. 1443, § 7.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. to choose at random, *Mon. O.F.P. Hist.* vol. IV, pp. 90, 91, 108, 113, 140.

lites); 1487 (Servites); 1506 (Minims and others); 1507 (Montolivétans); 1512 (Austin canons); 1513 (Camaldulensians); three others followed (1521, 1558, 1560), and then the question was taken up by the Council of Trent. In 1501, Alexander VI had actually granted the Franciscans leave to "expel their incorrigible subjects, as rotten members"—in other words, to let them loose upon the world (*ibid.* p. 222). But there is even more significance, perhaps, in the frequency with which stray instances, or general allusions, crop up in documents not directly concerned with the monasteries themselves. Here, for example, is a casual notice from the history of our universities. Richard II complained that certain Dominicans<sup>1</sup> "utterly lacking approval or instruction in God's Law, but apostates and notoriously vicious . . . condemned by their Order to prison, go beyond seas and fraudulently beg and procure [from the pope] the master's degree and other graces of exemption." And, when the culprit really did arrive at his place of banishment, what was likely to be the result in the majority of cases? In theory, he was to begin a new life, a life of real conversion, in a house at least as strict as that from which he had been ejected; if possible, the new house should be stricter than the old. But (as Archbishop Winchelsey practically asked), how long would the stricter house keep its purity with a steady leaven of lapsed monks thus working within it? Sometimes, of course, such a fresh start might enable the monk to turn over a new leaf<sup>2</sup>; but this was less and less likely in proportion as fervent monastic vocations became rarer, and the proportion increased of those who had merely drifted into the cloister. Trithem knew monastic life as intimately as any men of his generation; as a reformed Benedictine of Bursfeld, he knew the best side as well as the worst; he is one of a small group at the eve of the Reformation who, if a dozen righteous men could have saved monasticism, might have averted religious revolution. Yet his deliberate judgement

<sup>1</sup> Rashdall, *Univ.* vol. II, p. 751, from *Rot. Claus. Ric.* II, 14, m. 32.

<sup>2</sup> There is a passage in which Hugues de St-Cher says that in many cases—*plerumque*—abbots are able to "commit greater things to those who, after their fall, live commendably and have strenuously amended their evil deeds." But the context implies that these are not cases of banishment; rather, cases where the monk lives on under the continuous influence of the same abbot (vol. VI, f. 227, 2).

is such as, if it had come from a modern author, would probably have been taxed with prejudice. He writes:

Let us consider those who have fallen into this foul ditch [of unchastity] and have afterwards been constrained to penance by the authority of their superiors; of what sort is their conversation among their brethren? They bear no signs of true compunction, but lead a restless life in dryness of heart. There is no mental devotion to be seen in them, but everywhere they follow after fleshly solace. O, how rarely is any man, who has once been hurled into the gulf of fornication, converted to the sweetness of inward love!<sup>1</sup>

These words imply a condemnation of the banishment system; and, in fact, it reduced a good many cells to the condition of mere dumping-grounds for wastrels. Norwich cathedral priory had four dependent cells, and from two of them this complaint is very clearly recorded. At Nicke's visitation in 1526 (p. 197), the prior of the cell of Aldby "says that the prior [of Norwich] is wont to send incorrigible and rebellious subjects to the cells." At that of 1532 (p. 265), the prior of Yarmouth

says that brothers William London and Richard Lopham, lately dwelling in the said cell of Yarmouth, murmur against the said prior, for that he, the prior, at the time of his abode in Yarmouth, wished to reform those who practised dicing in different forms<sup>2</sup>, and other dishonest games. *Item*, he says that the younger monks make conventicles among themselves, murmuring against their other brethren and disdaining them.

<sup>1</sup> Homil. XXI, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> *Frequentes taxillos et talos et alios ludos inhonestos*. Dr Jessopp's marginal gloss of "backgammon" is one of the many mistakes into which he falls in editing these records: backgammon is *tabulae*, and different forms of dice—*tali et taxilli*—are regularly bracketed together in ecclesiastical and other statutes prohibitive of gambling.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### PUNISHMENT (2)

ANOTHER source of contempt for ecclesiastical discipline has already been alluded to; the system of money-fines for moral offences. We have seen, again, how naturally this grew up. In the early Church, to deprive a man of the Sacraments might be more terrifying than to take his very life; but such excommunication had gradually lost most of its terrors. In proportion as Christianity extended, the fraction to whom spiritual things were more real than temporal became smaller and smaller; even if the numerator had not dwindled, the denominator had grown out of all proportion; excommunication was less feared; therefore the hierarchy were tempted to use it oftener and more freely in order to keep up its effect; therefore its very frequency brought it more and more into contempt. Scattered instances of this kind meet us everywhere. Hüllmann has collected a number of cases from town life in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. He points out that the three great Italian cities which had least temptation to support the emperors were also those which cared least for the papal ban; Milan, Bologna, and Florence bore it three times each in those two centuries, and with great indifference.

Milan, on the third occasion, held out for 22 years, and Frankfort-on-Oder even for 28 (1326 onwards), so that, when their quarrels with the treacherous bishops of Lebus were at last settled, and Church ceremonies were introduced again [into the city], the younger generation found food for laughter in them<sup>1</sup>.

Those, therefore, who could not be touched in the spirit must be touched in the purse. Pecham assures us already in the

<sup>1</sup> *Städtewesen d. Mittelalters*, vol. iv, 1829, pp. 130-3. Hüllmann aptly refers to the decree of Boniface VIII (*Sext. Decret.* l. v, tit. xi, c. 24) which confesses that excommunication must be less indiscriminately wielded in future, "because, by reason of the strictness of these statutes, the indevotion of the people is increased and heresies swarm among us and infinite perils to souls spring up." Two generations later (1363) the archbishop of Cologne complained that there were communities in his province which had remained ten years under interdict, not troubling to procure absolution (Löhr, p. 260 n.).

thirteenth century, what we know on ample authority for the fifteenth and sixteenth, that this was systematic in Wales, "and the avarice of bishops had carried the practice to such an excess that the fines of criminous clerks seemed rather to be licences to sin than penalties"<sup>1</sup>. But his contemporary, Cardinal Hugues de St-Cher, shows how strong the temptation was, with its superficial advantages even in the interests of discipline:

When a man is smitten with excommunication, he grieveth not; but if he be smitten with a fine, then is he smitten in the hinder parts, and he feeleth the pain, and such men are enemies of God<sup>2</sup>.

A generation after Pecham, Guillaume Durand brought the matter before the Council of Vienne:

Another neglect of correction is that grievous and most grievous offences and crimes, committed by ecclesiastics, when they happen to be punished, are punished by fines; whereas the men who do these misdeeds ought to be imprisoned for life. . . . The remedy here would be, that such amercements as the Church takes for churchmen and their offences should be applied to pious uses, even as, according to some doctors, law itself requires<sup>3</sup>.

This was one of the points by which men hoped that the re-enactment and strict enforcement of time-honoured discipline might stem the beginnings of the Reformation; the archbishops of Cologne were specially active here, as they had their special reasons. For there the surviving archdeacons' account-books show how, at the end of the Middle Ages,

innumerable cases of transgression were punished simply with fines. . . . It is especially noticeable that the concubinage [of the clergy] was also punished by fines, although this is the very offence for which Cardinal Nicholas of Cues, at the Provincial Council of Cologne in 1452, had fixed for beneficed clergy a suspension of three months from the fruits of their benefices, and had threatened, in cases of relapse, even perpetual incapacity for ecclesiastical office or for receiving a benefice. . . . The clergy themselves seem not to have felt special resentment against these wholesale amercements; at least, the account-books show no resistances or refusals, such as we often find, for instance, in the fines for non-residence.

This was quite natural; concubinaries paid the comparatively

<sup>1</sup> *Epp.* vol. III, introd. p. xxxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. II, f. 207, 3 (on Ps. lxxvii, 66, Vulg.).

<sup>3</sup> Durandus, pars III, tit. 49, p. 334.

small tax regularly, and were insured against the enforcement of the cardinal's decrees. Meanwhile the public protested, in a memorial to the Duke of Cleves, that this system resulted not "in the enforcement of equal justice or in the edification of good Christian morals and suppression and punishment of misdeeds, but that, under the cloak of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, filthy lucre was practised"<sup>1</sup>.

This comes out equally plainly, for England, in the Chapter Acts of Ripon, published by the Surtees Society. These show clearly the fatal effects of the system upon discipline in the fifteenth century. The full sentence on incontinent priests is recorded in five cases; in none was there any attempt to deprive him, and in only one was the nominal sentence actually carried out. In one case the culprit redeemed it for a private penance and a fine of 3s.; in the other three, it was redeemed for similar fines without even the private penance. For instance (p. 126, A.D. 1467), an incontinent chaplain is condemned

"to stand or kneel in his surplice, with head and feet bare, reading the Psalter at the church font, for three Sundays, from the beginning of his hour of penance until the advent of the procession to the church: then he shall rise and lead the procession to the choir door, kneeling and praying there over the said Psalter until the end of the High Mass, with a wax candle of a pound's weight in his hand, and to beg and obtain pardon of the canons. Afterwards" (proceeds the record quietly), "he compounded with our office for his penance, redeeming it for a sum of 3s. 4d. to be applied to the Canons' alms."

In fact, the ordinary clerical tariff of redemption was evidently about 1s. per day; for, on p. 3, six similar Sundays of shame are remitted for a fine of 6s. For the lower (and therefore poorer) orders of clergy, redemption was easier still; one of them (p. 36) escaped six "whippings in front of the Cross" at the easy rate of 2s. for the lot. One layman, on the other hand, had to pay £10 to escape six public whippings, unless we have here a clerical error (p. 123). Ripon, it is true, was not a monastery, and this practice of regular money-commutation was extra-monastic; but it was part of the same system under which monks were supposed to be corrected, and it played its part in discrediting the whole machinery.

<sup>1</sup> Löhr, p. 263; but see all pp. 262-77.



Another great hindrance to effective punishment was the support which sinners often procured from outside friends. When we come, in a later volume, to evaluate the pleas of the neighbouring gentry in favour of the monks in 1536, this must be taken into account. Neither the monk's unpopularity with certain classes and at certain times and places, nor his popularity in other cases, rested upon purely religious and moral considerations. Some men despised him when he did not take his vocation seriously; but others liked him on that very account. Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale* is in complete harmony with many formal monastic records. Where visitors—not always either popular or deserving of popularity—were struggling to enforce the Rule and the Statutes, the sympathy of a large proportion of the public for the offenders meets us at every turn. On the rare occasions when visitors, however secure in legal and moral right, tried in the last resort to bring actual force and to evict those who would not obey, it will, I think, be found in three cases out of four that the countryside used or threatened force in defence of men or women who had no excuse in law or in religion. This was partly because their own interests were touched, especially in the case of nunneries, which were the ordinary refuge of portionless daughters from among the better-class neighbours<sup>1</sup>. Even among the inmates of the men's houses, the squire or the citizens commonly had kinsfolk or the kinsfolk of friends, and were far less concerned that these cloisterers should be righteous overmuch, than that they should visit and return visits as good companions, bringing their own good cheer with them<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, the squire had very commonly a sinecure or an easy office in the house, as *advocatus*, seneschal, receiver, etc.<sup>3</sup>, a consideration which must heavily discount the pleas of neighbouring magnates against Henry VIII's dissolution, especially when we note that the plea sometimes contained, by way of postscript, a prayer for financial compensation if the house were in fact dissolved. There were doubtless other reasons also;

<sup>1</sup> Johann Busch's stirring experiences with dissolute nunneries and sympathetic neighbours are summarized by Dr Eileen Power (*Med. Eng. Nunneries*, pp. 671 ff.) and will be dealt with in my last volume.

<sup>2</sup> See details in vol. III, the chapter on monastic diet.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Savine, pp. 245-62.

but, however we explain it, the striking fact remains that, from the time when records become plentiful, we find a startling proportion of cases in which infraction of the plainest monastic regulations was as easily condoned by the majority of the outside public as (we are sometimes told) the breach of liquor-laws is condoned in America. We may note it in gross, and it is equally conspicuous in individual cases. Among the earliest Cistercian decrees are those forbidding that convicted offenders should appeal for protection to powerful friends outside the convent, or that others should get themselves promoted in the Order by similar external pressure. Here again, the frequent repetition of the prohibition in Cistercian and other codes bears witness to the ubiquity of the danger and the difficulty of meeting it; it was strong even in the case of friars<sup>1</sup>.

For (and we shall find contemporaries saying this) indulgences and relaxations gradually became so common as almost to acquire the force of customary law, there was no more pretence of enforcing some of the most important prescriptions of St Benedict's Rule than there is, nowadays, of enforcing the obsolete legislation against Sunday trading, or anti-Christian writings and speeches, or the settlement of Jesuit communities. Public opinion no longer took these things so seriously as to side with any visitor who, by insisting on these "old and some-deal strait" restrictions, found himself with ecclesiastical law at his back, but with a determined body of male or female recalcitrants barring his path. We shall find the learned, pious and energetic Fox, bishop of Winchester and founder of Corpus Christi College at Oxford, first writing to hail Wolsey as a god-sent reformer of the monasteries and, after the lapse of a few years, driven to apologize to this same Wolsey for having actually tried to enforce St Benedict's Rule and Boniface VIII's bull prescribing the effective claustration of all nuns. And, a few years later again, we shall find Thomas Cromwell accused of villainous motives because he insisted on that same papal statute, in the series of injunctions which he issued as visitor-general of the monasteries.

Money, then, and apostasy, and outside support provided

<sup>1</sup> The Dominicans found it necessary to legislate on this point as early as 1236 (*Mon. Frat. Praed.* vol. I, p. 5).

the offender's three main avenues of escape from punishment; and there were many others. This will be seen most clearly from the visitors' own narratives in my final volume; meanwhile, it will suffice to give a brief catena of other instances.

In Stephen of Tournai's letters there are frequent indications of the difficulty which even a powerful and universally-respected prelate found in getting rid of notorious offenders, or bringing them to condign punishment. The prior whose mismanagement was swamping his house with debts; the canon who had been five times expelled from his monastery for his "intolerable and enormous excesses," and who yet had bought the favour of the Roman court; the rebellious monks who had purchased similar protection; the unchaste priest whose presence as confessor to the nuns of St-Cyr was causing general scandal, and who yet enjoyed the patronage of the archbishop of Reims. To this prelate Stephen writes in protest:

If you are unwilling altogether to supersede this man; and if your mandate compels the abbess and her cloistered sisters to hold communion with this aforesaid monster of Venus, I beseech you that you will be pleased to commit the cognizance of this case to the lord bishop of Paris [in whose diocese St-Cyr is], that he may be able to investigate and seek out the truth through the clergy and laity of the neighbourhood.

He has to appeal to the pope against the monastery of St-Jean-de-Soissons, in open rebellion against authority<sup>1</sup>.

About this same time, again, Innocent III had to deal with the abbey of La Celle. This was in a disgraceful state; "the brethren had long been incorrigible and rebellious, and frequent scorers of [their abbot's] repeated warnings; they were fornicators, adulterous, traders, and open usurers." Finally, the precentor, the almoner and two others hired four murderers at the price of sixty pounds, and these men killed the abbot on his way to matins, piercing him with more than forty wounds. The great pope decrees that, "if no grave scandal is feared," these four principal monastic culprits are to be degraded from their Orders and imprisoned for life on bread and water:

but, if grave scandal be feared, such as is not quieted even after you have striven to defend these bloodguilty men by your intercession,

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 211, coll. 319, 338, 350, 359, 387.

then do thou degrade them publicly, warn them earnestly to penitence, and leave them to the secular arm to be punished according to the legitimate constitutions<sup>1</sup>.

Here, as we have already seen with Odo Rigaldi, the great pope is willing to diminish the punishment so long as the offence can be concealed; and Pecham followed a similar policy<sup>2</sup>.

This archbishop's letters are of special value here, since he was a prelate of strict, and almost inconvenient, purity of life and zeal for discipline. A case of the year 1283 is particularly significant. The prior of Boxgrove was convicted of immorality; the bishop of Chichester fined him £10. But Pecham took the case up. He pointed out that such compositions were contrary to canon law, and essentially unjust, since it would simply mean fining the community for its chief's sin: the prior, he insisted, must be deposed without undue delay. He was in fact deposed, and sent to Battle abbey; after nine months, he was allowed to return to Boxgrove on condition that he should not leave the precincts for a whole year, nor speak during that time to any woman, nor, even after that time, except in the presence of two other monks who might hear all that was said<sup>3</sup>. Take, again, the case of Carmarthen priory. Pecham "removed [Ralph] from the priorate, as justice demanded, by reason of his manifest demerits." But Ralph's superior, the abbot of Sherborne, reinstated the sinner, "thus eluding and contemning our office," and tranquilly accepting *ipso facto* excommunication<sup>4</sup>. Thirdly, there is the case of William de Ledbury, prior of Great Malvern. The bishop of Worcester, his diocesan, described this man in 1282 as "illegitimate, a dilapidator [of the conventual possessions], irregular, crazy, notoriously *diffamatus* for the crimes of fornication, adultery and incest with no less than twenty-two women"<sup>5</sup>. Yet the prior defied his bishop, and finally bought him off with the present of one of the convent manors; he defied Pecham, made his peace with the king (the sheriff having attached him as an impenitent excommunicate) and was formally restored to his priorate in 1283, having in the meanwhile succeeded in inflicting severe imprisonment on one of the five

<sup>1</sup> *Epp.* lib. XIII, no. 132; P.L. vol. 216, col. 319.

<sup>2</sup> *Epp.* R.S. p. 826.

<sup>3</sup> *Epp.* R.S. pp. 553, 574, 682-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Epp.* R.S. p. 811.

<sup>5</sup> *Epp.* vol. II, pref. p. lxxix n.; a brief *résumé* of the whole story is there given.

monks whose complaints had secured his deposition. It was only in 1287 that this monster was finally deposed<sup>1</sup>. Read where we may in the records of the golden thirteenth century, it is very difficult to find an abbot, even the most criminous, subjected to what modern society would look upon as adequate and deterrent penalties. Quite characteristic is the treatment of the hunting abbot, Magenard, who had reduced St-Maur-des-Fossés to a state of scandalous indiscipline. Here the reformers were no less than a king, a count of exceptional religious fervour, and the greatest abbot in Christendom. Yet Magenard was "of noble birth, akin to the rich citizen Ansoald of Paris," and he was consoled for the loss of his first office by the prelacy of the dependent priory of Glanfeuil, "that he might be the pastor of the brethren who dwelt therein. He dwelt there for the rest of his life, and was buried before the face of Christ's crucifix in the church"<sup>2</sup>.

Nor were matters better in the fourteenth century. Henry, abbot of Hirschau, began "to live licentiously soon after" his election in 1300, yet it was only in 1317 that his deposition was procured through the emperor's interference. Bishop Guillaume Durand pleaded before the Council of Vienne (1311) for the enforcement of the ancient but practically obsolete Church laws "that all Religious and other persons who sin publicly, and thereby scandalize the Church of God, should be publicly rebuked, corrected and punished. . . and that no privilege should stand in the way of such punishment"<sup>3</sup>. Yet things only went from bad to worse. St Catharine of Siena, in her *Dialogue* (1378), is much concerned to uphold the sacred character of the clergy, and threatens damnation to those who, in Italian cities of her day, were beginning to punish criminous priests and monks by methods of civil law; yet she is compelled to confess that these men had the provocation of clerical impunity.

No state can be kept healthy, whether in Civil or in Divine Law, without holy Justice; for he who is not corrected and correcteth not is as a member which beginneth to putrefy; if the evil physician apply ointment only, without cautery, then the whole body waxeth putrid and corrupt. . . Good physicians of souls, such as were those

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale-Caley, vol. III, p. 443.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 143, col. 851.

<sup>3</sup> *Tractatus*, etc. pt II, tit. xxii, p. 112. See Appendix 33.

glorious Pastors [St Peter, St Gregory, etc.] will not give the ointment without the fire of rebuke; and, if the member be still obstinate in evil, then will they cut it off from the congregation, that it corrupt not the rest with the stench of mortal sin. But nowadays they do not so; nay, they make as though they saw not. And knowest thou wherefore? The root of self-love liveth in them, whereby they dwell in perverse and servile fear; because, for fear of losing their state or their temporal goods or their prelacy, they correct not, but make as though they were blind...and again they correct not, because they themselves live in the same faults, or worse...and they themselves find excuse for not punishing. In such men is fulfilled the word of [God's] truth: *They be blind leaders of the blind, and, if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*<sup>1</sup>.

Concrete instances are common in English history also. Mr Leach's comment on the Southwell Minster visitations is: "We can only conclude that neglect of duty and sexual immorality were so common that they were never punished except when some public scandal was created by them"<sup>2</sup>. For instance, Robert of Waynflet was a thoroughly unsatisfactory abbot of Bardney; he was deposed in 1303, restored soon after, and resigned in 1318. He was then given, for his own support and that of his household, the revenues of two manors and two small priories<sup>3</sup>. Henry Kirton of Westminster, in 1446, was summoned to answer to the pope "on a charge of being a fornicator, dilapidator, adulterer, simoniac, and guilty of other crimes." In 1462 or 1463 he resigned, on a pension of 200 marks a year. His successor, Abbot Norwich, dilapidated the revenues so grievously that he was compelled to resign in 1467; he was granted leave "to reside in some ancient monastery with a chaplain and a few retainers," on a pension of 100 marks<sup>4</sup>. In 1476, a canon made himself abbot of La Trappe by means of a forged document, and at once began to embezzle the conventual property. He and the notary who had forged for him

<sup>1</sup> *Dialogo*, ch. 119, ed. Gigli, p. 192. So far is faithfully rendered in Mr Algar Thorold's translation, published with the approval of the archbishop of Westminster. After this, however, without any warning to the reader, the ten consecutive chapters are suppressed in which St Catharine speaks most plainly about the priests and monks of her day; see Appendix 36.

<sup>2</sup> Camden Soc. 1891, p. lxxxix. But Southwell, like Ripon, was a secular chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Dugdale-Caley, vol. 1, pp. 634-5.

<sup>4</sup> E. H. Pearce, *Monks of Westminster* (Camb. 1916), pp. 130, 141.

were condemned by the Parlement of Paris; the latter was degraded and imprisoned, but the false abbot escaped with a fine<sup>1</sup>. And, just about this time, Trithem may be found generalizing on this subject before his fellow-abbots, in a newly-reformed Benedictine congregation, assembled in General Chapter.

Very few have come to this Chapter; where are the excusatory letters of those who have sent no proxies? Where are the double fines of the rebels? Who, for many years past, has ever been compelled to pay the fine for absence or the double fine for rebellion? What do statutes avail us, or laws, or papal privileges, if they are not practised in time of need? . . . This winking at the rebellion of a few will give occasion for many to struggle against [discipline].

And again: "Ye have the help of law to initiate a reform; ye have the Rule and the statutes; one thing only is required of you, that ye should put these things into practice"<sup>2</sup>. This steady neglect of unquestionable law, whether civil or ecclesiastical, cannot be fully realized but by those who have spent some time in southern Italy, or some similar backwater of the modern world, and who have talked with the people themselves. Even in the mid-thirteenth century, Odo Rigaldi found many monasteries which had not a single copy of that Rule or of those papal statutes by which monastic life was nominally regulated, and there was considerable delay before some of these houses obeyed his command to supply themselves with this foundation-stone of all discipline. Still less regard was often paid to mere episcopal commands; when Bishop Alnwick visited Bardney (1438), it was testified that

the injunctions made by divers lords and bishops in their divers visitations held in that place to further the healthy governance of the monastery, in things spiritual as well as temporal, are hidden away and are not brought out in public, so that nothing is known of them; and so the good governance of the whole monastery is going to naught<sup>3</sup>.

Most significant of all, perhaps, is what the reader will already have occasionally noticed, the actual promotion of serious offenders, or their settlement with a handsome pension. It has been observed by modern historians, with astonishment and

<sup>1</sup> Gaillardin, vol. 1, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Dehort.* c. ix, p. 264; cf. c. xi, p. 269.

<sup>3</sup> *Alnwick*, p. 16.

scandal, that among the Religious to whom Henry VIII's visitors gave some of the worst characters at the Dissolution, a few received some of the most liberal pensions. But nobody seems to have realized how exactly here, as in nearly all his injustices during the whole of that bad business, Henry was treading in the steps of popes and prelates before him. Bishop Nicke pensioned the adulterous, thieving and homicidal prior of Walsingham<sup>1</sup>. Grandisson, a far stronger and more righteous bishop, had to deal with a scandalous abbot at Tavistock; he pensioned him off with the equivalent of about £1600 a year in pre-war currency, which left only £2000 a year for the needs of all the rest of the abbey. For this abbot was a Courtenay, of the most powerful noble family in Devon, and even Grandisson, a man of still nobler birth, dared not drive him to extremities<sup>2</sup>. All through the Middle Ages, this matter of ecclesiastical discipline was revolving in a vicious circle. Impunity bred discouragement among visitors, deepening into despair and inaction, and episcopal inaction perpetuated impunity.

These instances will suffice to explain why Sir Thomas More, even in the heat of his apology for the Church of his day, tells a story against monastic discipline which he does not profess to give except from hearsay, yet which he could have had no reason whatever for introducing unless he had felt it to be *ben trovato*; I print it fully in Appendix 32. Almost at the same time, the Dominican Pépin was telling a milder tale of the same kind in France, which had been told two and a half centuries earlier by a greater Dominican, Cardinal Hugues de St-Cher:

Note the story of that abbess who scourged one of her nuns with a fox's tail for unchastity. Therefore many prelates, judges and rulers of the people, are very remiss in punishing the transgressions of their subjects; nay, many of them are wont to say to their subjects: "Beware of scandals, lest I be compelled to punish you; as to the rest, I will be benign and gracious to you"; and through this remiss and lukewarm justice they lead them down to hell with themselves<sup>3</sup>. In other words, they inculcate that ancient rule, quoted by Salimbene and other medieval ecclesiastics: *Si non caste, tamen caute*.

<sup>1</sup> *Medieval Studies*, no. 1 (2nd ed. p. 11), where this matter is dealt with more fully.

<sup>2</sup> *Reg. Grand.* pp. 887, 889.

<sup>3</sup> *Sermones*, f. 68 a.



We need not wonder, therefore, that, a century and a half before the Reformation, the citizens of the most civilized towns in Europe had begun to treat ecclesiastical discipline as an unreality, to be realized only through lay interference. In spite of the principle for which Becket suffered death, the Londoners and Strassburgers, Florentines and Venetians and Bolognese and others, insisted now on punishing the criminous clergy themselves; the duke of Austria was even willing to hang incorrigible monks. In other words, the laity began actually to enforce those measures for which the hierarchy, in spite of Durand's plea at Vienne, had never dared to fight an unhesitating fight<sup>1</sup>. In this connexion, it is most enlightening to compare St Catharine of Siena in 1372 with Savonarola a century later. No orthodox medieval writer—it may almost be said, no heretic—was more painfully conscious of clerical corruption than St Catharine; we shall see something of this in Chapter XXVII, yet she is equally emphatic as to the wickedness of lay interference<sup>2</sup>. The evil clergy are “demons incarnate”; but God has forbidden that we should touch His anointed; “thy tongue cannot suffice to say how abominable this is to Me”; those who invoke civil law for the punishment of clerical criminals will go to hell<sup>3</sup>. By Savonarola's time that position was broken down. “I preached the other day” (he says), “in the Palazzo [Pubblico], that you should purge the city of vices,

<sup>1</sup> For the duke of Austria see Busch, p. 736; for Strassburg, Dacheux, p. 71; for other German cases, Störmann, pp. 269–70: for London, “Letter-book 1” (ed. Sharpe), which contains dozens of cases from the reigns of Henry IV to Henry VI; for Florence, Villani, lib. xii, c. 43 (1345), and Davidsohn, vol. iv, pp. 147–50; for Venice, Sacchetti, Novella cxi (the injured husband or father allowed to beat the clerical seducer), and Molmenti, ch. vii; and for the neighbouring towns of Udine and Cividale, Marcotti, pp. 170, 183, 187; for Bologna, Frati, p. 258; Forlì, Sacchetti, Novella xxv. The English statute of 1485, consequent upon a petition from the Commons, though not directly relevant to this question of lay interference, is yet most significant in its indication of the trend of public opinion (1 Henry VII, c. 4, compared with *Rot. Parl.* vol. vi, p. 335 b). Apparently at Paris, about 1500, it was possible for the Parlement even to drown a priestly felon (O. Maillard, *Quadragesimale Opus*, Paris, Petit, 1512, serm. xxxvii, f. 92 a).

<sup>2</sup> Even the merchant Villani, recording the Florentine statute of 1345 by which the townsfolk claimed to punish criminous clergy, disapproves of it.

<sup>3</sup> *Dialogo*, ed. Gigli, pp. 184, 188, 208, 237. Alvarus Pelagius, about forty years earlier, had spoken equally strongly on both points, the frequency of clerical crimes and the wickedness of lay interference (*De Planct. Eccl.* lib. ii, art. 23, f. 129 d).

and that, in some cases, you might even remove the wickedness of the wicked priests; which words offended some." Therefore he must make two points clear. First, he was speaking only of any priest so wicked as to infect society: "if such a priest be a corrupter of others, as one infamous, or sodomite, or magician, or heretic, or a traitor to his country." Secondly, the lay folk must intervene only in the last resort. They must appeal to the priest's bishop, to the monk's or friar's conventual superior and, if need be, to the pope. When all these efforts fail, "then, if they will not see to your business, I hold for certain in that case that you not only may banish him, but even that it is your duty so to do." It is futile to allege "the liberties of the Church," for the real intention of the Church is the salvation of souls, and here is a poisoner of souls. Therefore, looking not to details but to principles, "See how the Church's will is that even priests be corrected by lay folk when they err."

Moreover, I say unto you that anyone may do this, in zeal for the Church and for the honour of Christ. Will you see whether this be true? Let us ask Christ. Put the case that we send an embassy to Christ, and tell Him how there is here a wicked priest or Religious, according to the case I put before you, and ask Him whether He would wish us to drive him out; I believe that He would certainly answer *Yes*. Therefore, if we sent the same message to the prelate, and the prelate answered *No*, and said that we should let the man do his own pleasure, would you not answer: *O wicked prelate!* So, if even Christ answered that He would not have us drive him out, you would say that even Christ was evil; but God forbid! for that cannot be said!...[St Paul saith] *Purge out the old leaven!* the whole ruin of the Church cometh from no other cause than the impunity of wicked men. Believe me, if you would do justice, and lay your hands to the rod for a while, things would go better than they go now. This unwillingness to punish is the cause of all evil<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore it is in the light of this reaction from the impunity of centuries that we must read such an incident as that of 1539, when the hangman of Toulouse was paid, "pour mettre à exécution l'arrêt de la court à l'encontre de frère Anthoine Ricardi, religieux, condamné à estre bruslé tout vif, pour crime détestable"<sup>2</sup>. In so far as post-reformation monasticism, in Roman Catholic countries, showed more regularity of discipline,

<sup>1</sup> Sav. *Pred.* no. x, pp. 215-20.

<sup>2</sup> Desmaze, p. 117.

this is mainly traceable to the influence and action of the civil authorities. The emperor Ferdinand I pressed upon the Fathers of Trent a memorial from the German clergy complaining of the abuses which had become inveterate in the Empire:

The impudence of the clergy has grown to such a pitch that priests think they may commit with impunity, as though they had the best law at their back, crimes which in layfolk are punished by public penalties.... Because the strength of the Church is grown sickly, justice is hamstrung; there is no power of executing the law<sup>1</sup>.

But the council itself practically ignored the emperor's memorial.

<sup>1</sup> Schelhorn, vol. 1, p. 543. The memorial dates from 1562, but deals with the conditions of the preceding two generations; see especially p. 565.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE EVESHAM CASE (I)

THE preceding seven chapters form a mosaic for the arrangement of which I am naturally responsible. It is possible, without absolute inaccuracy of detail, so to arrange our facts as to give a general impression which is false, and he would be a rash writer who should venture to defend his own generalizations with the same confidence with which he might be able to insist upon the details. The most laborious tree-drawing may result in a bad impression of the wood; and we may well desire a picture of the medieval visitatorial system painted, not at six or seven hundred years' distance, but from direct and first-hand vision. Dom Berlière, in his valuable *Recrutement dans les monastères bénédictins*, concludes on a note which seems at first sight to suggest a task of discouraging magnitude for the historian. The most significant feature of Benedictinism, he insists, is the independence of the separate houses. This was in one sense their weakness, in another sense their strength; side by side with a very bad house, we may find a very good one; therefore "we must study these [monasteries] separately, and draw no general conclusions but from the repetition and the frequency of the same phenomena" (p. 66). But, among this vast multitude of houses, how can such a task be fulfilled? The large majority have left no records of historical significance for good or for evil; and, if we had records of them all, who could suffice for the herculean task of reading and appraising so vast a mass, especially since there are very few students of Dom Berlière's courage, willing to cover exhaustively one wide stretch of this almost infinite field, and to publish what they find there. But, on closer consideration, we find his conclusion less agnostic than it seemed at first sight; he will permit "generalizing" to some extent, so long as we do not "universalize" (p. 65), and there, no doubt, the caution is right; in the corruptest districts or periods there may be the most brilliant exceptions. The historian of monasticism in general, therefore, must do the best he can

to collect facts and draw inferences after the same general fashion as Dom Berlière, though with less confidence in proportion to his less complete mastery of the wider material. He has, it is true, a resource which Dom Berlière has too little regarded; we shall come to this in Chapter xxvi. But, meanwhile, it must be confessed that the preceding seven chapters represent mainly a modern generalization from materials which, in the nature of the case, are not exhaustive. Moreover, it is a generalization from the outside. True, the modern monk is sometimes seriously misled by an assumption of greater continuity than really exists between those who, whether in the thirteenth century or in the twentieth, are called by the same name—Benedictine, Franciscan, or whatever it may be; even the outward life has changed very much, and the inward thoughts still more. But the outsider has other more obvious, if not necessarily greater, disadvantages in his attempt to arrive at the exact truth; and the reader may well desire, after all this painfully-constructed scheme from outside, to get a direct and intimate glimpse from inside, however brief this may be. The most accurate plans and sections and elevations need supplementing by something far more intimately visible and tangible. Who shall take us bodily by the hand and show us round this ancient building?

In a very real sense, we have such a guide ready to our hand in Thomas de Marleberge, abbot of Evesham. Thomas was one of the two protagonists in a visitatorial tragi-comedy of almost unrivalled interest; and, until we come to Busch and other autobiographers in the fifteenth century, no man will tell us so exactly how things were done on these occasions, and what were the thoughts on either side. For he speaks quite frankly, to a sympathetic and discreet audience of fellow-Benedictines, without any bias or afterthought that is not obvious and easily discounted; moreover, those which might seem the most incredible of his assertions, and the most naturally attributable to personal hostility, are abundantly corroborated by contemporary authorities. Therefore, among the many concrete cases which might be told in full to illustrate my general arguments as to visitatorial procedure, I have chosen this of Evesham as not only the most detailed, but also the most illuminating. We

have here an abbey of the first rank, in England, where the system worked more regularly, on the whole, than in any other great country of Europe, and at a date before the period of rapid monastic decay had definitely set in. Most important of all, the story is told at great length by one of the principal actors, not from the visitors' point of view, as is usually the case, but from that of the monks. If we had set ourselves to imagine, *a priori*, the most illuminating kind of evidence for the purposes of our present enquiry, we could scarcely have asked for a better witness than this of the Evesham Chronicle.

Abbot Marleberge was born in the latter half of the twelfth century and died in 1236. He took the cowl probably at a mature age, as a man already learned in civil and canon law, about 1199 or 1200; but his own words seem to show plainly that he had known the abbey intimately from at least as early as 1191. By 1204 we find him "dean of Christianity"<sup>1</sup>; in 1215 he was present at the Fourth Lateran Council; in 1218, prior of Evesham; in 1229, abbot. The litigation which he describes in his *Chronicle* acquired European importance; the case was incorporated in canon law as a precedent (*Decret. Greg.* l. v, tit. xxxiii, c. 17), and the villain of the piece is prominent in other chroniclers of the time.

Gervase of Canterbury thus describes this villain, Roger Norreis, who had been his own fellow-monk at the great cathedral church (vol. 1, p. 382):

From the early days of his monastic career he was proud, arrogant, pompous in word and treacherous in deed, greedy of promotion, a scorner of the monastic Rule, fawning on his superiors and contemptuous to his inferiors, ostentatious in dress, negligent in observance of the Order, a friend of women and a lover of horses, wrathful in rebuke, a ready backbiter, and incorrigible at every point.

Archbishop Baldwin, well intentioned but inconsiderate, thrust him into the priorate against the monks' wishes; he made himself intolerable; they mutinied and imprisoned him; he escaped

<sup>1</sup> Great monasteries like Westminster and St Albans sometimes had archidiaconal powers, their dependent churches being visited not by the diocesan but by an archdeacon chosen from among the monks. At Evesham this official had the powers of a rural dean over the churches in the Vale of Evesham. Giraldus Cambrensis mentions this, and criticizes it very naturally, as inconsistent with monastic retirement and simplicity (R.S. vol. iv, p. 96).

one night through an orifice more practicable than dignified, joined his protector, the archbishop, and was presently imposed by royal influence upon the monks of Evesham. So far goes Gervase's story.

These are the words of a personal enemy; so also are the allusions in *Epistolae Cantuarienses* to "Roger of the Jakes"; but they are outdone by Giraldus Cambrensis, who, unlike the other two, was rather on the archbishop's side in this great quarrel. He pillories Roger, with the contemporary abbots of Westminster and Bardney, as "three great beasts," the most conspicuous of their day for crime and for public punishment, though he adds, "how many more are there who yet lurk in the English Church like unto these men, or straying even worse and more perilously, if possible, from the ways of truth and honour, whom we know not yet to have been corrected either by their superior abbots or by legates of the Holy See!"<sup>1</sup> This Roger, writes Giraldus, was a monk "of that haughty and most opulent cathedral monastery at Canterbury." On his promotion to the abbacy of Evesham,

transferred from wealth to wealth, and nurtured in idleness and pleasure, he was not exempt from those vices which almost always cling inseparably to the rich: to wit, pride and lechery. For through pride the daughter [Evesham] deserted her mother [Worcester], and strove to escape from her bosom, to loose the bond of due subjection, and to emancipate herself. But, as this Roger's vice of wantonness grew upon him to most monstrous proportions, he scoured all the villages and hamlets and manors of the abbey like a stallion neighing after every mare, and so perniciously gave rein to every enticement of lustful pleasure, laying no bridle upon his sensual impulses, that (according to the true report of his neighbours), he is said to have begotten eighteen or more children of each sex, with grievous scandal, as one who feared neither God nor man; so that in him there seemed to be fulfilled the words of that pagan poet who satirizes such follies: "Nothing was safe from this man's lust, not the highborn matron, etc."<sup>2</sup> Yet since, even as no good is unrewarded, so no evil is unpunished on earth, in process of time Nicholas, bishop of Tusculum and cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, on his legation in England, hearing and carefully noting these things, cast down this monster, and deposed him with merited disgrace and due confusion from that dignity which he had evilly sought (for it had been obtained un-

<sup>1</sup> *Opera*, R.S. vol. iv, p. 93. His description of Roger begins on p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Juvenal vi, 370.

canonically through his superiors and great folk), and far more evilly administered. But what punishment, I ask, could be found worthy of so deep-dyed a criminal, the vilest of men? This man who set so dark a blot upon order and honour, both ecclesiastical and monastic, by excesses so enormous, so public, and so scandalous, was he not rather worthy of suspension from the gallows than from his abbacy? would not burning or stoning have fitted him rather than deposition? In short, any penalty would fall short of his deserts; a crime that so touched the whole people is beyond all kinds of punishment. Yet we have seen this great beast (who, as it is reported, broke through the openings of the latrines and escaped through the privy chamber from the custody of the Canterbury monks, and fled then to the Archbishop, and by this exploit earned his abbacy)—him, I say, we have seen sitting side by side with the abbot of Abingdon, who was raised from cook to abbot of that same house in consideration of 1500 marks which he gave to a prince; both abbots congratulating each other and rejoicing together in their delights and riches that they had thus obtained, embracing and caressing each other in turn. Both were bejewelled, boasting and brandishing golden signets on their fingers like bishops, great rings with costly gems to fascinate the beholders.

In 1191, then, Abbot Adam died and this Roger was promoted to Evesham. The monastery, says Marleberge, was then peculiarly prosperous and efficient: "Although the predecessors of this abbot [Adam] had been religious and excellently-ordered men, yet Adam is said to have done more than these others to reform the Order" (p. 102). This testimonial lends great significance to the rest of the story, which shall be told as far as possible in the chronicler's own words.

Adam's successor was Roger, monk of no monastery; for, whereas he had been a monk at Christ Church, Canterbury, his fellow-monks clapped him into prison for treason, because he had revealed the secrets of their chapter to the lord Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury, who at that time was quarrelling with the monks, through his project of building the chapel of Hackington<sup>1</sup>. From this prison (though he had pledged himself by oath to stability of place) he slipped forth half-naked through I know not what exit, escaped from his fellows' hands, and was honourably received by the archbishop, who attached him to his person as his constant companion, and afterwards, in spite of the monks and their open protests, made him prior of that

<sup>1</sup> Which, the monks feared, would throw the cathedral priory into the background; see Stubbs's introduction to *Epistolae Cantuarienses*, R.S. pp. xxxvii ff.



monastery; but in vain, for he was never thenceforth reconciled with the community, although he spent the closest diligence and much money to that end; so that, shut out from Canterbury, he remained a monk of no monastery. Since, therefore, the monks would not receive him, he thrust himself among them, invaded and appropriated all their possessions, plundered their goods, deprived them of food and clothing, and guarded the monastery with his henchmen, sons of Belial, and with no support but from two runaway monks, lest the brethren should go forth.

The archbishop and king, therefore, forced him now upon reluctant Evesham.

Roger himself often used to say, concerning this his entrance among us, that the lord king had given him this abbey for his services, which was as much as to say, "I came not into the sheepfold through the door, but by other ways"; and in truth he was not asked for by any chapter, as canon law prescribes. This abbot made a magnanimous show, and seemed to abound in much knowledge of letters, for he was ready of speech and of great eloquence. Moreover, he was very courtly and free-handed, and boastful at table, abounding more richly in food and drink; and he distributed these things copiously and honourably to whomsoever and whensoever he would, striving to hide under this cloak not the soldiership of Christ (as St Sebastian did) but his own disorders. For he was vinolent and lecherous above all monks in England, although he confessed himself not for a monk, and would not concede that simple fornication was a mortal sin (whereby he seduced women), unless incest or adultery be added thereto—though he himself, men said, stuck neither at this nor at that. And we ourselves know that these things are partly true; yet we restrain our pen, God knoweth, for reverence of the Order. And, whereas he became of this sort within a few years after he had come to us, within which time he bore himself quite temperately towards the monks, yet he [then] was elated to such pride that he seemed almost mad in his great learning and lavishness, and abjured the church, the chapterhouse, the care of souls and the observance of our Order almost altogether. For he ceased holding chapters many years before his deposition, seven or more; he ate not in the refectory, nor sat in the cloister with the brethren; seldom he entered the church; moreover, to church and cloister and chapter he commonly came in a gown<sup>1</sup>; and (not to speak of his other disorders of dress) he wore linen shirts and used linen bedsheets without

<sup>1</sup> *Cappatus*—i.e. in the long and elegant robe which secular clergy, nobles, citizens, and even women wore, and from which the university gown is indirectly descended; as distinct from the monk's loose and comparatively shapeless frock.

disguise<sup>1</sup>. Also he began to hold the monks in such contempt that he was wont not to call them by their proper names, nor *monks*, but *puppies*, *vassals*, and *ribalds*. And, if they ever murmured at their insufficient food (which often happened not without cause), he called them *his menials*, to whom he would give what he pleased; and (as if to excuse his own crime) he called them all indiscriminately *whoremongers*. Nevertheless, though we were thus despised, yet was this the lesser care in our breast; what grieved us most was that our abbot, as I have said, not only made himself strange to us but even stinted us of food and raiment, pouring them into his own gulf; also, that he kept the other offices in his hand as long as he pleased. Sometimes he gave out the revenues to farm to certain false brethren, keeping for himself and appropriating the better part of the offices and giving the rest to the false brethren. Sometimes, again, without consulting us, he exchanged good portions for worse, as Bourton (which belonged to the chamberlain) for Sambourne (which belongs to the cellarer). At one time he so despoiled us of the chamberlain's rents that many brethren, for want of frocks, were long unable to attend in choir or in chapter, while others, worse still, for want of cowls and breeches could neither celebrate Mass nor come in among the brethren. Moreover, we lived many days on bare bread and water, and many days we had only hard bread, with beer that was scarce more than water, and no pittances<sup>2</sup>. Yet he, with some of the brethren, was in delight and affluence; and he would dwell sometimes three months, sometimes longer, at Badby, and again at Bradwell or Bourton, in which manors he had built noble buildings, almost royal; and here he revelled in gluttony and wantonness all the time until he was deposed. But we at Evesham (God be my witness!) would fain have filled our bellies with the coarser bread that his servants did eat; and no man gave unto us. At length, under pressure of hunger, we came unto ourselves and complained of this matter to the lord Hubert archbishop of Canterbury, then legate for all England. But the abbot, by turning to guileful arguments, promising and giving presents, and corrupting some of the brethren, and restoring the offices to us for a time, made peace for himself and thus escaped from the lord legate's hand. For the sake of which peace, however, he assigned (at the lord legate's command), certain revenues for the pittancery; for before [his time] we were wont to receive at certain times, for this purpose, wine and mead from the cellar and flesh from the abbot's larder, whence there often arose great murmuring and great defects. The legate also restored to us the [revenues of] the church of St Laurence, which the abbot had

<sup>1</sup> These were forbidden by Benedictine constitutions.

<sup>2</sup> The pittance was an extra allowance of food and drink beyond the ordinary prescription of the Rule; I deal with this subject in vol. III.

given in spite of our protests to one Gilbert, his clerk; and thus we were amended and bettered by these tribulations. But after a year, when the legation had expired, the abbot again trod his monks underfoot, and again appropriated not only the revenues of the pittance but also those of the [building] works and almost all the rest, and amassed a vast hoard of money, especially from the rents that belonged to the monks; by means of which money, though the monks oftentimes accused him, he stoutly repelled them from their accusations and subdued them to his will. For he had gained the friendship of many great folk of the realm, and especially of the justices, through his prodigality in food and liberality in gifts, which he lavished with the utmost freedom when need required. Yet none the less the monks lay in continual wait for him, and attacked his vices as best they could; but he made light of them and of their efforts, pursuing and hating them; and in process of time he cast some forth from the monastery. Moreover, he laid violent hands on some that were sent by the convent to his chamber, and upon others he bade his men lay hands. Yet, with God's help, we always escaped alive from his hands, though it be reported that some died for lack of the necessities of life.

Then the monks again, under compulsion of misery and hunger, as men unable to bear these things, wrote to my lord of Canterbury (as to their special legate, though no longer legate general), who was then abroad (and this it was which gave the abbot his boldness), telling him of their afflictions and of the abbot's tyranny and disorders; he, on his return, came to Evesham in great agitation, and made diligent enquiry into what he had heard. But the abbot, fleeing there again to his familiar devices, corrupted the brethren with gifts and through his friends as before; and, restoring the offices unto us, he bought peace for himself. That time, for the sake of peace, he took Sambourne again and gave us Addlestrop for the chamberlain's office instead of Bourton; and so the tribulation was always to our profit. But yet the peace lasted no long while; for shortly again, when the archbishop had his hands full with the Lambeth case, he scourged us more cruelly than ever before and appropriated all our revenues, and our last state became worse than our first. Thus we often obtained our own revenues and were oftentimes despoiled of them. And, although we suffered so many adversities, yet by the help of a magnanimous and excellently wise man and good monk, to wit, master Thomas of Northwich, who had gained the favour of the whole neighbourhood through his wisdom, and specially through his skill in physic, we built the tower of the church, converting to that work the rents of the pittance whenever we got them, and all else that we were able to withdraw [from his clutches] for ourselves.

Enough now of this; let me presently come to those things which we suffered for the liberty of our monastery. "In weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city of Rome, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren (I speak as a fool) I have suffered more. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not."

With this we pass to *Particula Secunda*, Book II of Marleberge's narrative.

In those days the bishop of Worcester was my lord Mauger, a just and godfearing man. He, grieving at the abbot's disorders and pitying our misery, led by righteous zeal, obtained an indult from the lord pope especially for the correction of our condition, as he himself oftentimes said; by which indult he had leave to visit the churches subjected to him by diocesan law, all appeals being set aside. He wrote to the abbot in this form: "Know that we shall come unto you on such and such a day, to abide with you that day for the sake of visitation." The abbot, seeing these letters after dinner on the day of the Assumption of the B.V.M., and knowing nought of civil or canon law, answered: "He will be welcome"; for he understood not the sense of the letter, and, profuse as he was, he made light of [the expense of] entertaining the bishop in his lodging. When therefore the messenger had departed with this answer, a contention arose among the abbot's disciples as to the meaning of this mandate; and I, as one skilled in the law, was called in from the cloister; for some said that the bishop was coming to see the abbot as a friend; others, on the contrary, that he was coming to depose the abbot because he hated him. So I said that, if he admitted him "for the sake of visitation," then on the strength of that phrase, and by reason of the aforesaid indult (which the bishop had already exhibited at Gloucester, where he had begun his visitation), he had power to correct errors both in the head and in the members, even unto deposition and degradation, and that no liberty would be left thenceforward to our monastery if we once admitted him as monks subject to diocesan law; wherefore I hastily dissuaded the abbot—nay, on the part of the community I prohibited him—from admitting the bishop under those terms.

Thomas then describes the discussion in the abbey, and the arguments in favour of submission to the bishop. Some of the abbot's toadies, "who had grown rotten with him in their dung, like the sow that walloweth in the mire," were in favour of avoiding conflict, and buying peace by outward submission.

Others, like Phineas and Mattathias, were fired with the zeal of righteousness, and ready to die rather than surrender the "liberties" of the abbey. These (and the words are the words of Thomas the skilled lawyer) pointed out how the convent could spend far more money on litigation than the bishop<sup>1</sup>, and therefore how strong a position they had *a priori* at the court of Rome, "which loves exemptions." They protested, even weeping, that "no fate could be worse than to be reduced to slavery." There was no resisting men so ready both with their quilllets and with their tears; three brethren were sent to protest against the bishop's visitation, and to threaten an appeal to Rome.

When we had reported this to the abbot, he turned to cunning arguments and wonted resources, and sent certain of his familiars to solicit the bishop, if by any means he might induce him to accept admittance on the terms that he, the abbot, might secure his own position against any episcopal interference. For thus he had wrought in earlier days with a certain bishop of Worcester, John of Coutances. He admitted him to the chapterhouse; and there, against the protests of the brethren, he allowed the bishop's written statutes and decrees to be read, and accepted them to be kept; but to the bishop he gave sixty marks, and renounced the use of mitre and tunic, dalmatic and sandals, for all the days of that bishop's life, on condition that he himself should escape [personal] censure. But this present bishop would make no such simoniacal bargain, only he postponed his visit to another day.

The abbot now retired to his manor of Bradwell; the bishop came to Evesham. Here, though the monks locked the guesten-house against him and the stables against his horses, he summoned them to meet him in chapter (Aug. 23, 1202). Marleberge was put forward with twelve other monks to convey the convent's refusal to the bishop, who sat by the high altar. He pleaded that to allow their abbey to relapse into "servitude" would be to lose their honour and risk their immortal souls. Meanwhile the brethren began to stream into the church for their 9 o'clock service of tierce; therefore:

I said unto the bishop: "Arise quickly and go hence in haste, and depart from among us; for here cometh the community to the

<sup>1</sup> This, and one or two similar touches, should make us cautious of accepting too literally the passages in which Thomas describes the monks as actually starved by the abbot.

work of God”<sup>1</sup>. Then said the bishop: “Are these threats?” and I replied: “Certainly, for you were foolish to come hither—*stulte enim venistis*.” So the bishop went forth from the church and went into the chapterhouse with [his attendant] abbots and priors and many clergy; and we were summoned once, twice, and thrice. Each time we twelve appeared before him; words of contumely and reviling were bandied on either side; we warned the bishop with threats to depart, constantly repeating our protests and our appeal [to the pope].

At last about noon, when the monks had to go in to dinner, the bishop sent to announce their solemn suspension for contumacy. Next day he excommunicated them in due form; “but we, notwithstanding, went on celebrating our services with all solemnity.” Marleberge went to see the abbot at Bradwell:

but, as I stood without and would fain have spoken with him, he sent me word to depart, for he would not speak with me, seeing that I was excommunicate. So I departed to Sewell, one of our chamberlain’s manors, and slept there, thinking that night might bring counsel, and that the abbot was drunken, as was his daily wont, and sometimes twice in the day; or else that he had then with him one of his concubines, on whose account he had often been wont to exclude us from his chambers, although it was also his wont to have his concubines haunting his rooms promiscuously under our eyes. So at dawn I came again to Bradwell, and was refused entrance, nor was his mind changed for the better, but I had the same answer as before; for he had not yet lost hope of corrupting the bishop by some means or other, and of betraying us perfidiously to him. But the bishop, as a son of truth, consented not unto his iniquity.

So I departed; and on the third day I met my lord of Canterbury on the road three miles beyond London; and, having saluted him with tears and many wailings on the part of the brethren, yet I told him in order, very rhetorically, all that had been done, and besought instantly our release from the bishop’s excommunication, adding at the end: “Holy father, this concerns you more nearly than us, and it is your cause for which we stand. . . . Therefore, my lord, defend your part and your own sheep.” Then said the archbishop: “We well remember [that we are your official visitor,] and we will not that ye tell all men, but rather that ye dissemble; for, by St Julian, if God help us, we will lose neither our rights nor our possessions so long as we live. . . . Go then, and, on the fifth day after this, appear before us at Worcester; and we will there prescribe what is just.” And I, coming home, told the brethren what had been done; and they, rejoicing with great joy, sang and wept. But our abbot had

<sup>1</sup> *Opus Dei*; St Benedict’s name for the seven daily services.

retired to Badby, and prepared for a journey to Rome; for by this time he had lost all hope of corrupting the bishop.

The case dragged on; it was prorogued to Lincoln; meanwhile Marleberge caught the abbot up

at Newbury, in secular dress... and, consoling him with the archbishop's words to me, and by the hope we had conceived of annulling the bishop's sentence, I promised him also solemnly before the Lord—in *verbo Domini*—that, if the bishop obtained a bull making us his subjects (the thing which we most feared, and which in fact came upon us), I promised, I say, that we [monks] would never make against him, [the abbot,] in the bishop's presence, any objection which might tend to his deposition; but that we would stand faithfully by him against the bishop in his personal defence, if he would return and stand by us in the cause of the abbey. And afterwards, when I was at Rome, at the time of the restitution [of the bishop's visitatorial power], my brethren manfully fulfilled this promise of mine, standing by the abbot even to the casting off of their [or his?] habit, when the bishop wished to hold an enquiry into the abbot's personal conduct; and the brethren would tell the bishop nothing, though he commanded this under pain of excommunication. So that day he took security and returned to Evesham; "and the same day" the abbot and convent "were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves." Then also it was provided that whatsoever he had taken before against our will—to wit, the revenues of the pittance which pertained to our drink, (except a few extra allowances of wine to us), and those of the church fabric, and two dishes of furmenty and beans, and the wastel-cakes and extra wine from the cellar, (except on certain fixed days), and the rugs, should be given up to the abbot's use, to maintain this lawsuit so long as it should endure; and although, before this, hospitality had perished from among us, and many had died of hunger when the abbot at his own will cut off the daily allowances both of guests and of servants, yet we now granted that all these things should be at the abbot's disposal for the lawsuit, and we would never accuse him for this so long as the withdrawal was by our own consent. But we ourselves, as of old unwillingly, so now of our own free will, did for many years afterwards eat naked and plain vegetables for our principal dish, and the almoner fed our servants; and so our sea fell back into tranquillity. Therefore, peace being thus made between us, our abbot (for he was great of heart) prepared himself for the trial at Lincoln like an aspiring squire [hoping to win his spurs].

The case was adjourned to London, but no clear decision was given. The bishop of Worcester appealed to Rome, but there he met more than his match in Marleberge.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE EVESHAM CASE (2)

MEDIEVAL preachers tell us of a man who had been a great advocate "in the world," but who, when he became a monk, lost all his cases, not caring to enrich his monastery by the tricks of the courts, at the risk of that very soul which he had come in to save<sup>1</sup>. Thomas de Marleberge also had been a lawyer in the world, and a good one, but the brethren had no reason to regret their choice of this man to fight their cause in Rome. He did not, like Abbot Samson of St Edmundsbury, find a Boswell; perhaps he did not deserve one: we know very little of his personality beyond what he tells us himself. He was evidently a smaller man than Samson in every way, yet big enough for the hero of an historic battle at the Roman court.

He, like Samson, had begun as a teacher in the world<sup>2</sup>, but a teacher of law. He would probably have confessed, as frankly as Samson did, that he would never have taken the monastic vows, if he could have got a comfortable living by a learned profession. When, in 1205, he got a six months' holiday from his litigation in Rome, he spent it in daily attendance at the lectures of civilians and canonists at Bologna. His own narrative leaves no doubt that he thoroughly enjoyed the rough-and-tumble of the lawcourts, as apart from the labours and difficulties of his journey and (to some extent) of his sojourn in Rome. He was fortunate in his pope, for the case was heard by Innocent III, frequently in person. Even in legal science Thomas seems to have outmatched his opponents, and certainly he beat them in shrewdness and activity. To him, failure meant the loss of all that he prized most in this world; life would not be worth living in an abbey subject to ordinary episcopal jurisdiction

<sup>1</sup> Jacques de Vitry, *Exempla*, p. 20; Étienne de Bourbon, *Anecd. Hist.* p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> *Chron. Eves.* p. 267. Certainly Thomas, and perhaps Samson, were in that intermediate position between schoolmaster and university teacher which corresponded in many ways to the modern Extension Lecturer.



(pp. 113, 114, 260). Therefore, starting for Rome, he quitted his brethren

with tears and lamentation, adding that, if I lost the case, I would never come back, nor ever see their face but in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I was resolved, if vanquished, to retire to some monastery in Rome and die there, mourning for this great loss I should have brought upon our abbey. For almost all the countryside despaired of our victory, saying that it was my presumption and pride which had led us to undertake this great and arduous case, beyond our strength [p. 142].

Nor would guilty failure mean earthly misery alone, but a strict and solemn account at the Last Day: "indeed, the everlasting damnation of our souls" (p. 117; cf. p. 138). This conviction carried him through. The bishop's advocates made a fatal move through overhaste, for the summer came on in Rome and

they thought more of saving their own lives than of gaining their lord's cause. But I, to whom my cause was dearer than my life (for, as I have often told you, my soul was at stake), sought not mine own things but those of Jesus Christ and mine own abbey. Wherefore I feared neither delay nor death, desiring to lay down my life, if need be, for the cause of my abbey's liberties. This I have written to you [my brethren], that ye may know how all men are as hirelings in the business of our abbey save the monks alone, and that ye may never commit our abbey business to any man without a monk [to look after him] [p. 151].

Yet, for all this desperate earnest, his self-control and shrewd observation seldom or never failed. He silently enjoyed the diffuse and empty rhetoric with which the leading advocate on the bishop's side wearied Innocent, who lost patience at last, flashed a fierce glance upon him, and bade him come to the point (p. 152). Then, in reply, "knowing that the court loved brevity of speech, I spake with tears and lamentations," in a discourse which showed not only an admirable choice of the best legal points, but also a good deal of adroit flattery, with unostentatious reminders that the pope in this case (as the archbishop before) would find his own profit in the monks' victory. Twice, having secured a favourable ruling from Innocent, he took care to remind his adversaries that "it is a sort of sacrilege to dispute his [Holiness's] opinion" (pp. 165, 190). Innocent appears in this frank narrative (and indeed in all such familiar

records) as a really great man, not too good for human nature's daily food, but impressive to his contemporaries as to the formal historian. He would turn aside to his cardinals for a moment to jest *in vulgari*, but he held the scales with an obvious desire for justice. His own remarkable knowledge of canon law gave him an advantage which he freely used, not only to expose an advocate's sophism but, when necessary, with still more trenchant satire. Master Robert of Clipstone, pleading for the bishop of Worcester, was not satisfied with the pope's ruling that a certain point was already settled by prescription:

"Holy Father" (he pleaded), "we have learned in our schools, and this is the opinion of our masters, that no prescription can avail against episcopal rights." Then said the lord pope: "Certainly thou and thy masters had drunken deep of English ale when ye learned this." And, when Master Robert repeated his affirmation, the pope gave him the same answer.

A few minutes afterwards, the pope was equally downright with Thomas: "That is false law!"

The ins and outs of this trial would take us too far from our purpose, but it may be easily imagined how far these nineteen months of Italian litigation took Abbot Roger and monk Thomas away from St Benedict's ideal of cloistered seclusion at Evesham, with unbroken devotion to the *opus Dei*, and therefore what good reasons underlay the papal decrees against monastic study of canon or civil law. Abbot Roger "had returned like a dog to his vomit...for he trusted in the fact that, so long as this suit lasted between us and the bishop, we should never be likely to institute any action against him" (cf. pp. 124, 141). He robbed the abbey worse than before, boasting openly that he meant to leave nothing for any successor to enjoy; also (though falsely), that he had so ingratiated himself with the archbishop as to be secure in that quarter (p. 126). He had arrested Thomas before his departure from England, meaning (we are told) to kill him in prison (p. 127); Thomas escaped and took refuge with the archbishop. Then it was that the convent chose him to plead their cause in Rome; and Roger, fearing that they might break their promise and favour his deposition, must needs go to Rome also. Thomas had performed the journey in 40 days: the abbot travelled in greater comfort

and was imprisoned at Châlons on a charge which Thomas surmises, but refuses to specify for the sake of avoiding scandal (p. 143). He reached Rome nearly five months later, and Thomas had to secure himself by giving money to a lawyer who promised to procure his release if Roger should arrest him. He dared not call upon his abbot until he had posted friends to await his egress and, in case of necessity, to knock at the door and demand his return (p. 145). With another friend, who warned him of Roger's plots against his life, he took similar precautions (p. 145). At an early interview, "the abbot exclaimed, 'By the Queen of the Angels, I will be avenged of thee!' And I was ready to defend myself with my knife, which I had slipped into my girdle in case he should lay hands upon me" (p. 146). Roger, after spending lavishly abroad, rode home at his ease, almost killing the devoted and unworldly brother Adam Sortes, who had to keep up with him on foot. Thomas, as he had promised, stayed to the very end; and when, on April 6, 1206, Evesham was at last pronounced exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, he almost fainted as he kissed the pope's feet; men had to lift him from the ground (p. 170). The almost equally thorny question of the exemption of the abbey's churches in the Vale of Evesham was left over for decision in England<sup>1</sup>.

Meanwhile, how was the victor to get home? His purse was empty; he had borrowed up to the extreme of his credit, and had no money for the customary presents to pope and cardinals; therefore the pope forbade his departure from Rome<sup>2</sup>. He and his two companions were all ill; it was imperative to smuggle

<sup>1</sup> Thomas's frequent warnings to his brethren on this subject show how clearly he realized the weak side of the abbey's case, and the importance of avoiding any examination of the actual evidence, so long as the convent could go on exercising the jurisdiction which it had assumed: *beati possidentes*. The case lasted long after his death; it was decided in the convent's favour in 1249. A brief summary may be found in *Chron. Eves.* introd. pp. xxvi ff.

<sup>2</sup> p. 200. Marleberge had begun, after the regular custom, by giving presents all round before the case had come into court. He gave the pope a silver cup (p. 142), and again (p. 146), "we gratified the lord pope to the value of £100 sterling, and the cardinals and court to the value of 100 marks; but they would not accept them until many of them had ascertained that we had not a case at the court." But p. 142 shows that they were known to be *expectant* litigants. The other references in this paragraph are to pp. 197, 200.

the pope's judgement somehow to England. They agreed "that one of us should simulate greater sickness, and depart with the document, to liberate our brethren who were oppressed in England [by subjection to the bishop's authority] almost as the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, although we could not do this without grievous peril, by reason of the lord pope's prohibition." This succeeded; then the second monk fell really ill, and was given into the care of the Roman merchants, who meanwhile had seized the remaining documents as pledges for the 400 marks they had lent, and who were about to visit England to recover their debt on the spot. Thomas was now left alone, destitute of means to fee the pope and procure a safe-conduct, but rich, as ever, in native resources. He "received leave of absence from St Peter and St Paul and the other patron saints of the Holy City," or, in plain words, he prayed at their shrines that he might be able to slip away. Not only this, but he secured the unsuspecting Innocent's benediction also, by attending one of those public functions at which the pope blessed the whole crowd. Thus

with the apostolic benediction, which I had received with the multitude of the people, I departed by stealth, fearing still for the first five or six days of my journey that I might be recalled. And, God's grace being with me, although the Lord smote me in France with a grievous fever, I reached England safely again, and my brethren rejoiced with me, joining with me in thanks to God that they had received me safe again.

In his latter days at Rome, Thomas had managed another master-stroke of diplomacy (p. 199). He knew that the bishop of Worcester's advocate, Master Robert of Clipstone, had still up his sleeve some card which was to be played against Evesham in due time. But Robert, meanwhile, was commissioned with several other cases in the papal court. Wherefore

one day, when many special indulgences granted to this our adversary were being read in public audience [for final ratification], I came forward as an opponent and gainsaid them all, though many of them concerned me not in the least. And when, on the morrow, we had met for a hearing of the objections, I pitied the miserable dejection of my adversary and said that, if he would tell me the case he had against me, and renounce it, then I would renounce all my contradictions; and so it was agreed. Now the case was this; when the

bishop of Worcester gained jurisdiction over our abbey<sup>1</sup>, seeing that the monks (as I have often said) would not suffer him to enquire into the abbot's personal character by calling them as witnesses, then the bishop made enquiry through the dwellers in our district, under testimony of all the officials of his diocese, whose seals he appended to the document and sent it to the lord pope. This was the matter which Master Robert [now] renounced, and gave me the written schedule with broken seals; this was done with all secrecy between us, and we were made friends together, nor did either again strive to grieve the other. And so it came thus to pass that our abbot was not deposed by the lord pope; for, if he had seen this inquisition, wherein many grievous things were recorded, he would without doubt have deposed him; this was how it had also been contrived before, in England, that he should not be deposed by the bishop.

Thus, thanks to that admirable proportion of the serpent to the dove in Marleberge's moral complexion, he came home as victor to a victorious abbot. But here, as usual, the worst difficulties lay in the divergent interests of the two conquerors (p. 200). The abbot was jealous of his monk's brilliant success; and

now he thought himself secure, since his abbey was free and he could not be deposed by any other than the pope; for he knew not that the papal legates scrutinize and correct the transgressions of exempt more than of non-exempt houses, seeing that the latter have bishops to visit them, and the former have no other corrector than themselves<sup>2</sup>.

The papal legate in fact visited Evesham, listened to the mutual accusations of abbot and convent, and left two other abbots to continue the enquiry on the financial side, reserving farther enquiry into "spirituals" for himself. Abbot Roger, as before, bent before the storm. He made peace with the convent by securing to them by written charter a series of comforts which suggest that Thomas has exaggerated more than once in his complaints of nakedness and starvation at other times<sup>3</sup>. As to

<sup>1</sup> As he had done in 1205 by an interim judgement, before the case had been given against him at Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas's plea in favour of exemptions is not borne out by non-monastic contemporaries; we have seen how Guillaume d'Auvergne, a more impartial witness in this matter, tells us the contrary, and Giraldus repeats his words.

<sup>3</sup> "This," writes Thomas, "is, next to the confirmation of our exemption, one of the noblest achievements of this abbey" (p. 205). He gives it in the ampler form in which it was confirmed by Abbot Randolph, and ratified by

the more serious question of morals and religion, Roger "gat him the grace of the lord legate, and gave to the legate's nephew revenues amounting to ten marks [a year]."

Thus secured, he now refused to seal the financial agreement by which he had recently bought off his subjects. This drove them to bay; thirty able-bodied monks determined to shake the abbey dust from their feet in desperate protest. They buried the convent seal, gave the relics and treasure to the old and infirm brethren who remained, "to be guarded, under peril of their lives, even unto bloodshed," and marched forth, "all on foot, with our loins girded and staves in our hands" (Nov. 25, 1296). The abbot saw them, hastily summoned what friends he could, with horses and arms and staves, and caught them upon Wickwane hill, where a cross stood by the highway. They refused to come at his call, and,

seeing our constancy, he commanded his company to smite with the sword and take us; and we met them, unarmed against armed men, trusting in the Lord. So they drew their swords and laid hands upon certain of the brethren. But other brethren smote them manfully with the staves that they wielded; and, freeing their brethren from their clutches, drove them back. Thus, having driven them into the fields, we all marched forward together on our way, giving thanks unto God, (in whom we had set all our hope,) that we had lost not one of our company, albeit our adversaries had not escaped without harm. And we hastened to go forth from our own lands, in order that we might call, if need were, upon the public help of strangers who feared not the abbot; although many who were of the abbot's company here, being our born bondfolk, held rather with us in their own minds.

Thus they reached the bounds of Morcote, a manor belonging to Sir William Beauchamp, and here the abbot, crying out to them from his own land across the road, gave them fair words again. Many distrusted, but the majority were not inclined to

Innocent III in 1215. It begins by prescribing due forms of election for the conventual officers, and exact performance of their duties. It strictly forbids encroachment by the abbot upon the conventual revenues. These are definitely partitioned among the different officers; and it is minutely specified what comforts each officer must supply to the community. The longest and most detailed of all the sections describes the food; each monk was to have a three-pound loaf daily, with 2½ gallons of beer, and two cooked dishes, mostly of beans; for the numerous feast-days and anniversaries, there were liberal extra allowances of wine, mead, and different cakes or wafers. I give farther details in vol. III.

carry the mutiny farther; a messenger was sent to dig up the conventual signet, the convention was sealed on the spot, "and we returned that same day, rejoicing, to vespers."

But King John now quarrelled with the pope, and the Great Interdict came (March 1208), and then there was no fear of higher interference till John's reconciliation. In that interval Roger returned again to his vomit, and for five more years Thomas and his friends "suffered hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness." But, when a papal legate came again (Michaelmas 1213), Thomas slipped off to the archbishop at Croydon and obtained a promise that he and the legate would come to Evesham, compel the abbot to pay the 500 marks still owing for their victory in the Roman courts, and depose him in case of contumacy. The archbishop journeyed slowly towards the Cotswolds, with Thomas in his train, ready at all moments to give advice as to the primate's authority over the abbey. But "one Saturday evening, at Oxford, while the archbishop and the legate Pandulf and the dean of Salisbury sat together," Thomas was called to their presence and found the legate in great indignation.

Miserable wretch...wherefore hast thou freed thine abbey from servitude to the secular authority [of the bishop] if thou dost not free it from servitude to the devil?...Thou favourest thine abbot, and art in collusion with this man, who is a scandal to the whole monastic Order. By St Peter, we will come unto thee with the rod of fury; and we will begin by so punishing thee for thy concealment of these things that all others who hear this word shall fear [for themselves].

Thomas could only plead that he would be ready to tell the truth at the visitation. He was now sent back to his abbey, and soon afterwards Pandulf, on his way to Bristol, sent word to Roger that he would visit Evesham on the morrow. "When the abbot heard this news, his heart fell at once...and he turned unto me and said: 'All this has been plotted.'...And, although I constantly denied that it had been done by me, he oftentimes threatened me, so that I feared sore lest he should slay me, for it was night." Next day the legate came, but postponed business till the morrow. "Meanwhile various conventicles and consultations were held, both on the abbot's side and on ours." The

rest must be told in full; no abridgement could reproduce Thomas's exact shades of thought and expression.

Then, on the morrow, the lord legate entered into our chapter-house with a great company of his own clerks and of many abbots, and, having first preached unto us, he said: "We have heard much evil concerning this house; and God be our witness that we are come to correct it. Wherefore let some one among you arise and tell us the state of this abbey, both within and without; nor let him spare any man; and, if perchance he say less [than the truth], we command under pain of excommunication that others supply [the deficiency]." So, as no man rose to this call, I feared for myself; for his eyes, and those of almost all the brethren, were upon me; yet I held back, awaiting a second command. Then the lord legate turned unto me, saying: "Thou who hast stood in the court of Rome for this abbey, arise!" And when I stood and excused myself for mine ignorance and insufficiency, adding that there were many older men, and more familiar with the state of the abbey, then almost all the brethren cried to him to command me to speak, and he bade me stand forth in the midst, saying: "Let thy tongue spare no man, neither head nor members; for, by St Peter, if thou spare any we will not spare thee!" But I, though well premeditated, (for I had often thought these matters over by myself,) yet fearing for the issue of our case (as indeed the fates of lawsuits are ambiguous)<sup>1</sup>, trembling and dumb-founded, even unto tears, took up my parable and said: "Although civil and canon law forbid the indiscriminate accusation of superiors by their subjects, yet there are certain causes for which this is conceded, of which causes I will bring forward a few which touch our abbot and ourselves at present. If therefore a superior's life be so dishonest as is that of our abbot (as I will show more clearly than daylight, God willing, in my later words,) so that it gives scandal not only to his subjects but also to other neighbours, then the subjects have a right to accuse him, lest perchance, if they impugn not his vices, men believe them either to consent thereunto or even to share them. And to you, who are skilled in the law, I need not cite laws to this purpose lest I weary you, although it may suffice for my excuse that it is lawful for monks to be ignorant of law. For subjects are permitted to accuse their superiors when grievous peril is avoided by such accusation, or when some very great profit is gained, or when, for lack of such accusation, grievous inconvenience or peril may fall upon themselves or their monastery, or some very great

<sup>1</sup> We have seen how, by visitatorial law, if accusations were finally judged to be baseless, the accuser laid himself open to a proportionate penalty. The serious dangers which Thomas incurred under this *lex talionis* are emphasized on p. 266 of the *Chronicle*.



profit be lost. That all these things apply to the present case, I will prove clearly later, although all this preface is superfluous, since this present superior command not only excuses me of all guilt in this matter, but even lays upon me the necessity of pleading against my abbot. Therefore, since it is written that 'the just is first accuser of himself' (Prov. xviii, 17), with the exception of certain of our brethren whose mind is so firmly fixed on the Order that no earthly force can debar them from the observation thereof, monastic discipline hath almost perished among us; and, to confess the truth, as you will presently see, this is owing to the faulty administration of exterior things that are needful to our frail and infirm human nature. For, whereas we ought to keep silence, which is religious worship, at certain places and hours, yet, we, afflicted by hunger and thirst, not only voice our complaints at the times and places of silence, but even we murmur almost without ceasing, a thing most especially forbidden by St Benedict. For during many days, the number whereof I hold not in my memory, we have lived on plain bread and water in our refectory, for lack of pulse and all other foods and beer. Moreover, the bread which fed us was often such as even the least of the abbot's servants disdained, seeing that he and his servants refreshed themselves with excellent bread and other most delicate foods. And, whereas the abbot often took food before chapter<sup>1</sup>, we, for want of food, fasted until midday in summer, and in winter even unto vespers; and, to speak briefly, for many years now past it hath rarely befallen that, at the allotted hour, we had both beer and pulse; nay, scarce ever befel it that we sat down to table with no defect. For if, by some rare chance, we had food and drink to support our wretched life, (albeit we had this very seldom, by reason of his misusing of us,) yet it almost always came about that we lacked wood for cooking or salt for seasoning. Wherefore it happened very often that, if we had four eggs, we sent the fourth into the town for salt"<sup>2</sup>. And for all these accusations I specified certain defects, certain days, and certain hours, which it would be tedious and unprofitable to repeat here in full detail; but, when I then specified them, the abbot could not gainsay them, but said that all these things came to pass through poverty. [Then I continued]: "Moreover, holy father, the Work of God, for which we came into God's Church, hath almost failed from among us. For, whereas it is not our custom that a monk follow his conventual duties without frock or cowl or other orderly garments, yet there are very few among us, as you may here see, who lack not frock or cowl or other habits of the Order, wherefore

<sup>1</sup> Which, however, had not been held for the last seven years or more, as Thomas tells us more than once; cf. p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> Four eggs per monk was a common minimum for one course; see vol. III.

few of us frequent church, cloister, or refectory; but they dwell in the infirmary for lack of garments." To prove (as I think) the truth of this word, the legate called the abbot's chaplain to himself and felt him; he found that he had only his flannel shirt and cowl, wintertide as it was. "Moreover, holy father, whereas, according to our tradition, we are not permitted to celebrate Mass without breeches<sup>1</sup>, and many of us have no such garment, therefore, through this default, the celebration of many sacraments hath been omitted, the number whereof I know not by reason of their multitude. I blush to say it, but the abbot's chaplain—not he whom you proved even now, but another"—(and I named him by name, seeing that he was present) "when he had to sing Mass before the abbot and had no breeches, the abbot lent him his own, on condition that he should give them back when he had sung Mass. And from these defects, holy father, worse disorders than those aforesaid have befallen us. For we were wont to wander freely whithersoever we would, nor could the prior or other guardians of the Order rebuke us freely, seeing that we answered that they could not find us in food and raiment; and, since we had nothing to eat in refectory, we ate in closets and in corners. And some, like unto wandering sheep without a shepherd, roamed about the country to neighbouring abbeys; others to their kinsfolk and friends, from whom they sought some relief of their wretchedness, of whom I am the first; and we became as it were vagabonds, no man forbidding us, because necessity compelled. Wherefore we were branded with abominable infamy, since those who knew not the cause of our wanderings said that we did thus to satisfy our lechery. But the abbot and his accomplices increased our ill-fame with all their might, nor did the abbot rebuke us for these things, led by I know not what zeal, either as not understanding that he had undertaken the care of souls, or perchance in order that, if we ever accused him of the same vice, he might retort by objecting the same against us, or, (what I rather believe, since he was once cast forth from God's face,) he wished that others also should go with him to perdition<sup>2</sup>. Wherefore, meseems, our disorders should rather redound to his dishonour who gave the occasion of delinquency, neither hindering when he could nor forbidding when he should, than to that of the delinquents. Hospitality, holy father, hath altogether perished among us, except [that shown] to rich folk who exact honour by very fear; whereas, according to St Benedict's Rule, we ought to receive and cherish the poor, in whose persons we do more truly receive God. And not only from the poor, but even from our servants hath the abbot, for many years past, withdrawn their

<sup>1</sup> This is not in the Rule, and the puritan Cistercians therefore neglected it, thus laying themselves open to much broad satire.

<sup>2</sup> The emendation of *interitum* for R.S. *intentum* seems obvious.

due food; wherefore many have died of hunger, and not only servants but also monks, as they themselves confessed before their death, saying that, if they had a sufficient allowance, they might yet live; but there was no man who gave unto them," and I named these by name. "Wherefore, even to this present day, the poor are defrauded of our alms. For we give that which is left of our food to nourish our servants, without whom we cannot exist, although, by the statutes of our forefathers, one third part of the bread at this abbey belongs to the servants and the poor, besides the leavings [of our table], and two thirds to us and our guests. Moreover, holy father, we have no tight roofs; wherefore, if by chance some small shower fall, we have not even a place for divine service beyond the vaults, which themselves now threaten ruin; nor have we where to lay our heads; for this I offer no other proof than the witness of your eyes; and, if rain fall before your departure, your holiness will learn by experience that I say truth. For our abbot hath long since taken from us the rent of fifteen marks a year assigned for the covering of the church and adjacent buildings, and also the rent of a hundred marks for our offices, wherefrom, if we possessed them, all the aforesaid defects, whence the said disorders arise, might have been supplied." And I rehearsed how much he took yearly from our cellar allowances, and how much from the kitchen, and how much from other offices, and how he sucked all these into his gulf, and how he boasted that he would so provide for himself that he would never fear our accusation before any judge. And, having read from that deed wherein the abbot had sworn that he would keep all articles contained therein, I added: "If these things aforesaid, holy father, suffice not for the abbot's deposition, as to me they seem sufficient, then I accuse him of perjury, in having gone against his oath and taken these things from us." So the legate asked him wherefore he had done this; and he alleged only poverty in his excuse; but I showed plainly, on the contrary, that he abounded in all worldly goods and delights. To this he could not answer; and the legate bade me pass on to other matters; and I said: "Holy father, there are many other causes for our abbot's deposition. First, that he entered not by the door into the sheepfold but by other ways; for he intruded himself by the king's power, even as he himself was often wont to say that he gat this abbey not through us dogs (as he called us) but from the king for his services; and not we alone can prove this to your holiness, but the holy community of Christchurch, Canterbury, where once he was monk, but for his evil deeds he was there thrust into prison, until at last he was freed and escaped through the jakes; wherefore, deprived of that home, he was not asked for nor received by any other community. Nay, even after his flight from thence, by means of the archbishop's power he invaded the

possessions of those monks and spoiled their goods, by reason whereof the monks are still suing him for a thousand marks. And, having thus thrust himself into their possessions, giving out that the archbishop had made him prior, he caused two brethren to be taken who had been sent [by the convent] to the archbishop, and separated from each other, and clapped into close custody. The then archbishop, Baldwin, suffered all this at that time, for he was contending bitterly with his monks concerning the chapel of Hackington. Again, holy father, our abbot is simoniacal, for he sold the deanery of this abbey and the two chapels of Badsey and Bretforton to a certain chaplain named Alfred, clean apart from our knowledge. Some years later, when this chaplain confessed the deed to us, he resigned them at our advice; and then the abbot sold these same chapels to Geoffrey of Oxford, the son of his creditor, in spite of our opposition. And a few years after, when that clerk died, his father sued us, as he sues us still, for fifty marks which (as he says) his son never received from those chapels. Moreover, he openly appointed our officers for money"; and I rehearsed to him how much the abbot had received for this man, and that man, and many others. When the abbot admitted this, and said that this was quite lawful for him, the lord legate marvelled greatly at his ignorance. "Moreover, holy father, our abbot is a homicide, not only as aforesaid, of the monks and servants whom he slew by hunger, but also of a certain layman, a serf, our reeve, Austin of Salford, whom he caused to be thrust into prison and scourged until he had wellnigh breathed his last, for the sake of extorting money from him; and when he saw the man at the brink of death, he had him brought out of prison into his own house, where he soon died. Moreover, holy father, our abbot is a manifest dilapidator of the possessions of this abbey"; and I rehearsed the possessions, both of new clearings which he had given to his nephew and the seneschal, and other possessions which he had given to others whom I named. All this he denied not, but answered that he might grant his own clearings at will to any man whom he would, as possessions of his own acquisition; although he had not acquired the land, but only the king's licence to till it<sup>1</sup>.... And I added, "Holy father, not only for these possessions is our abbot a dilapidator deserving of deposition, but also, whereas he might have defended and retained certain other possessions, he made terms with some of our adversaries and granted them to them in law; again, he lost possession of some by contumacy, whereby, as the custom of the king's court runs, our adversaries came into real

<sup>1</sup> From this point forward I omit the abbot's excuses, which Thomas had no difficulty in exploding from the legal point of view. We can thus concentrate upon the point of real historical interest—the facts urged by the monks in their case for the abbot's deposition.

possession. . . . Moreover he hath so wasted the movables that we have not a twentieth part of the stores wherefrom we ought and might be principally sustained. Again, he hath so burdened us with debt that we shall hardly get free. . . . Moreover, holy father, our abbot is much disordered in his dress, wearing sheets in his bed and hosen sewn to his shoes, as knights wear them, and shirts (as you may prove on the spot), against the statutes of our Order. . . . Again, he weareth not a frock, but goeth about the church and cloister and chapterhouse in a gown, although for many years now past he hath held no chapter, nor sat in the cloister, but in his own chamber, where, without counsel or consent of the brethren and the chapter, he suspends and excommunicates monks, and deprives them of their statutory food, and there at his own will he sets officers up and casts them down." None of this he denied, but protested that these things were lawful for him; but I showed by the Rule of St Benedict and laws and canons and written customs of our abbey that they were not lawful. Wherefore the legate marvelled greatly that the abbot, as a man ignorant of law, often confessed that he could act against the law; and, as one wearied (for I had protracted my speech from early morning until past noon) he bade me speak of the abbot's incontinence. Whereunto I answered: "Holy father, seeing that the aforesaid suffice for his deposition, wherefore should I discover my father's nakedness?" And he again commanded me to speak; and I said: "Holy father, seeing that the abbot's crime of incontinence is notorious, if it please your holiness, we need not to dwell long on this matter. But, since many skilled lawyers are wont to doubt what is the definition of a notorious crime, I will expose a few things among those which are manifest to ourselves and to other of our neighbours, omitting those other almost innumerable cases which have tainted his fame and raised exceeding scandal even among distant folk. Therefore, holy father, our abbot is wont publicly and manifestly, in our sight and in that of others who enter his chamber, to keep his women<sup>1</sup> in his chamber from morning until evensong; and, even in summer, when others retired after dinner, these women remained with him through the noontide hours, alone save for the boy<sup>2</sup> who kept the door of his chamber. Whereat we were greatly scandalized; seeing that we were wont to observe this hour in our dormitory in complete silence, more honestly and secretly, if possible, than the hours of night. Moreover, when we enquired with the utmost diligence whether [these women] departed at evensong, we could never discover this, but on the morrow, when the abbot was wont to arise, they were often found there; and this was his very

<sup>1</sup> *Mulierculas*, always used in a strongly depreciatory sense.

<sup>2</sup> Or "servant," *puero*. The midday siesta in summer was a regular Benedictine custom.

frequent custom, not secretly but openly and shamelessly. And (what is more lamentable) not only with this or that unmarried woman"—and I named six—"but even such was his wont with women whose husbands were living"—and I gave the names of two—"one of whom he himself married to one of his own cousins within the third degree of kindred, who also, consenting to their great iniquity, was wont to bring his wife to the abbot even by night and to bring her home again from him. And (a yet greater subject of amazement and dismay!) he is wont to deal thus openly even with nuns"—whereof I named three—"cloaking his guilt under colour of religion, as though it were a work of piety, as he called it, to set them by his side at table and in talk, as was the wont of the blessed Benedict and his sister St Scholastica; though I am far from believing that St Benedict did this alone without witnesses, as our abbot was wont, even though so near a kinship and the holiness of both persons and the rarity of their mutual converse together should have abolished all suspicion in their case. Therefore, holy father, I have named a few of them unto you, since I know not the whole number; but almost all the brethren can bear witness with me to this thing, and especially five whose names I will give you in private. And, if ye will have the testimony of others than monks, then compel the clerks and layfolk whose names I will give you to bear witness unto the truth, and ye may have as many as ye will, albeit that public report and the notoriety of the thing itself, and the evidence of the fact, and the proofs that walk upon the earth<sup>1</sup> are enough to prove my words; to wit, the sons and daughters of those women, who claim no other father than him, nor did we ever hold or find any other than the abbot, nor can we yet. Moreover these women themselves not only publicly confess the same, but even boast themselves as concubines not of a monk, but of a royal baron, which the abbot himself suggested to them (to wit, that he is no monk), and whereby he hath seduced many. Upon wellnigh all these counts, most holy father (*wellnigh*, I say, seeing that his misdeeds wax from day to day) we made complaint before my lord of Canterbury, who in those days was papal legate, who made most diligent enquiry and promulgated many constitutions, all of which were brought to nought when he laid down the insignia of his legation [about 1196]; and afterwards, while the archbishop dwelt beyond the seas [in Normandy, 1198], our last state became worse than our first. We complained again upon these same points to the lord John, cardinal deacon of Sta Maria in Via Lata, then legate of the Apostolic See [1206], who made a special enquiry into these things and ordered it to be deposited and kept in the hands of the abbots of Haughmond and Lilleshall, who had been present at this inquisition, until he should dispose what

<sup>1</sup> *Testes super terram*, the children thus born.

was to be decided on these points in accordance with what he should provide. After his departure, before he published any decisions on these points, the abbot hath oppressed us worse than ever before, even unto this present day, saying that by reason of our complaint he had spent three hundred marks on the lord legate, all of which (as he said) he intended to get back from the possessions assigned to us; and, although he was then afraid for himself, yet hitherto his last error has been worse than his first. Seeing therefore, holy father, that our abbot, for fear of our aforesaid complaints and of the enquiries made thereupon, hath oftentimes promised both before the aforesaid legates and before his neighbour abbots, not only in writing but, as you have heard, upon oath, that he would reform all the aforesaid points as they should be, and keep them straight after his reformation, yet no correction hath ensued, either in his life or in our condition, but rather things wax worse from day to day; and because (to use Abner's words) 'desperation is perilous,' we therefore, knowing that our abbot's heart is hardened and that he turneth away his eyes lest he should see the heavens, if you leave him still in the abbacy at your departure, then as many of us as are not hindered by bodily infirmity from setting one foot before another, except three or four of the abbot's accomplices, will cast our habits at your feet and depart with you, returning into the world, that our souls may be required at your hand at the Last Day."

Having thus spoken, I went back to my seat. But the legate turned to our abbot and said: "What dost thou answer to the things objected against thee?" Then said the lord abbot: "I have already answered many of these; to the rest I now answer that the things which he objects to me are false." But the legate, addressing abbot and convent alike, said: "Lay your hands on your breasts, and say by God's word that ye will stand by our judgement upon the accusations and answers." When we had done this, he excommunicated all who should speak falsely, or conceal the truth, in these matters which he should ask of them. And, beginning with the prior, he asked one by one, saying: "Speak; are those things true which brother Thomas hath said?" And, when all answered that they were true, saving three brethren only, who said that they doubted of certain points, the legate looked upon the abbot and said unto him: "Thou hearest how many witnesses speak against thee; what dost thou answer?" Then said the abbot: "My lord, from their own words ye may know that they have conspired against me, as I will plainly prove." So the legate said, as though he favoured him: "If thou prove this, then their testimony must not be admitted against thee. But, because it is now towards evening and the day is far spent, prove it tomorrow morning, and take thy counsel with thyself, that thou mayest say against them whatsoever thou wilt." Having thus spoken, he with-

drew and ate in the refectory with the abbots his assessors and the convent, by the light of waxen candles; while the abbot, consoled by the legate's words, ate in his chamber with the legate's clerks and attendants. But I waited on the legate at table, where he gave me many consoling words, and a certain hope of the abbot's deposition.

So, when morning came, we met again in chapter. The lord legate, sitting at his judgement seat, with the abbots of York and Selby and the Cistercian abbey of St Martin in Tuscany as his assessors, and the abbots of Gloucester and Winchcombe summoned for this occasion, bade the abbot come forward and answer our accusations and prove us to be conspirators. So he stood out in the midst and objected to us that we had once brought down the arm of St Egwin to the chapterhouse, and sworn upon it that we would stand faithfully together in the business of our abbey against our abbot. And, although the answer was difficult (for the fact was indeed so), yet I answered thus: "Although this fact suffice not to prove us conspirators, yet, lest any man judge us guilty from this deed, know, holy father, that our abbot hath accused us on another occasion for this deed, before my lord of Canterbury who was then legate of the Apostolic See. My lord decreed that we should not be called conspirators for this deed, but nevertheless he imposed upon each of us a penance for it. And, seeing that God doth not punish twice for the same offence, this ought not to be imputed to us for guilt, which hath been blotted out by a sufficient penalty."

Seeing then that the legate did not reject our brethren's testimony on this account, the abbot brought some accusation against each of us, save only those three who had not borne witness against him; and against me in especial he said many opprobrious words. Whereupon the legate rebuked him, saying that I had spoken against him on compulsion, and that I had been very sparing of my words against him; and he commended me much for my good report at the court of Rome when I had been there under his wing. And, seeing that the abbot could prove none of his accusations against us, nor give any other answer to the accusations against himself, he bade us all withdraw, abbot and convent. Then, when he had discussed and taken counsel with his friends, we were all called in, and the legate took up his parable and said: "My lord abbot, seeing that thou hast confessed the commission of many of these misdeeds which have been objected against thee, and that thou hast no answer to others which thou deniest having perpetrated; seeing also that all the accusations have been sufficiently proved against thee, and that thou hatest the community and they love thee not, ye cannot dwell together without offence to many. And because it is written: 'Woe unto that man by whom offence cometh,' it is safer and better that one should depart than all; wherefore we absolve thee from the



pastoral care of this abbey; and we bid thee arise and beg pardon and mercy, according to the statutes of thine Order, concerning this obedience laid upon thee." And, seeing that he rose not at this command, he again commanded him to arise and beg for release from his office. So he then rose and fell upon the floor and repeated the words which the legate had put into his mouth and enjoined upon him. Then he arose and resigned into the legate's hands, with his cap<sup>1</sup>, both his cure of souls and all other administration, in spirituals and in temporals; and he renounced all rights that he had in Evesham abbey, even as the legate had put into his mouth.

So when this was done, and when he had taken his seat again—now as ex-abbot—I besought the legate to compel him to restore certain of the abbey goods which he had in his possession, and which I named. And there and then he gave back to the legate, as I had named them, his key of the abbey seal and his own seal, which the legate broke and kept in his own hands. Moreover he restored to us three copes and a chasuble, an alb and tunic and dalmatic, a pallium, all the vestments of cloth of gold, and a silver crosier, all of which he had bought himself and which even then were valued at fifty marks. He also restored to us the abbey's best red samite chasuble, and two chalices and three rings, and certain of our royal and papal charters and privileges, all of which he had gotten into his own hands that he might alienate them from the abbey, lest anyone should enjoy the abbey after him, as he himself had oftentimes threatened. For, as he frequently confessed, he had purposed to burden this house with debts in so far as he could, (as he had already almost done), and that he would pledge all that he could of the abbey privileges and ornaments, and, when he had sucked everything, in so far as he was able, into that gulf of his, then he would quit the place, lest he should die and be buried among us dogs (for so he was wont to call us). And thus he did in truth foretell his own evil end. So, when all these things had been restored, the legate told the abbot of Winchcombe, who always favoured him, to lead him forth from the chapterhouse, never to return; and so it was. Then the legate consoled us and bade us think of a new abbot; and, when he had given his benediction, we all departed from the chapterhouse, rejoicing that God had brought down the wicked and had freed us from Pharaoh's hand.

Five days afterwards, at the petition of the community, the legate had pity on him and gave him the priory of Penwortham<sup>2</sup> for his livelihood; but five months afterwards he deprived him thereof by

<sup>1</sup> Transfer of property or jurisdiction was constantly ratified, in medieval law, by the public transfer of some small personal possession—hood, glove, knife, etc. A master's degree at the university was ratified by giving him a cap.

<sup>2</sup> In Lancashire, a dependent cell to Evesham.

reason of his excesses. Then Roger went to Rome, but could get neither an abbey nor a priorate nor even a place as monk at Evesham. So, returning empty-handed, he joined himself to Silvester bishop of Worcester, to whom he suggested all that he thought might harm us and our abbey; yet he did us no harm.

He turned to the new legate, Gualo, but with equal ill-success, until at last, five full years after his deposition, the lord Pandulf, who was then legate in England, taking pity on him, lest he should be a vagabond all the days of his life, gave him back the priorate of Penwortham, where he embezzled all that he could of the revenues assigned to the community. Now he lived nearly six years afterwards; and although, during this time, he was warned—nay, advised and besought—by Master Adam Sortes by word of mouth, and by me who was then prior, and by the monks and his kinsfolk in the world and others, that he should write to the community for the remission of all anger on either side (although we had altogether forgiven him with all our hearts) and should beg the abbot and convent to make him a monk of Evesham, yet he would not hearken unto us, but died there and was there buried. Notwithstanding, although (as aforesaid) he was no monk of ours, yet the abbot and convent dealt mercifully with him and had all things done for him, both in spirituals and in temporals, as though he had died as one of our brethren at Evesham.

To the virtuous Thomas, this hugger-mugger burial of Roger far away from his natural cloister seemed almost as tragic as the nakedness of dead Palinurus by the seashore had seemed to Aeneas and his Trojans. In due time, that Idle Apprentice was followed by the Industrious Apprentice; Thomas, after steady proof of his value as prior, became abbot in the natural course, and pages of the chronicle are filled with his good works for the abbey, which perhaps was never more prosperous than under his rule. To this detailed recital of his long fight and final victory he added, in the leisure of his abbatial throne, many prudent warnings for the future. But here in prospect, as before in retrospect, his main emphasis is on questions of finance and power and dignity<sup>1</sup>. If anything can add to the historical significance of the bare facts which he records, it is to see this able and pious and, at bottom, honest man so hypnotized by the material considerations which seemed inseparable from the traditions of a great and rich abbey, so convinced that God

<sup>1</sup> See especially pp. 199, 201, and the editor's comments on p. xxx.

willed their independence of episcopal authority, and that God had given them all the parochial revenues of the Vale of Evesham on as secure a title as that by which Israel dispossessed the Hittites and Amorites and Girgashites<sup>1</sup>, as to feel no qualms about the shifts of law by which these claims were vindicated—nay, even to glory in them—and to let all his readers see so clearly that Roger's moral failings would have been condoned if only he had not starved his monks.

It would be difficult, as I have said, to choose a more illuminating *chose vue* to illustrate the far wider evidence of preceding chapters. We shall find, I think, that this Evesham case is altogether typical. Not, of course, that all peccant abbots were so wicked, or so long successful, as Roger, but that, when due proportion is borne in mind, there is nothing in the Evesham case which need surprise us. Given an abbot of equally strong passions, equal freedom of action, and equal pecuniary resources, all other medieval evidence tends to establish the likelihood of equal impunity. Again, that same evidence shows how little power the community would have had against him, even if they had been resolved to put spiritual things first, except by going out into the wilderness. The visitatorial system shared the ordinary defects of medieval legal procedure. Men were not themselves sufficiently disciplined, nor had they sufficient confidence in the justice of law and magistrates, to grow beyond that stage of semi-obedience which we see in Ireland and in south Italy, for instance, in our own day.

<sup>1</sup> Half the abbey revenues, says Thomas, came from these parishes (p. 140; cf. pp. 188, 197); I deal with this subject of the appropriation of churches in vol. III.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### A CATENA OF GENERALIZATIONS (I)

How far can we take this self-revelation of Abbot Thomas, with others which might be quoted from other chronicles, at their face value? The modern reader runs a double risk of anachronism here. On the one hand, the Evesham Chronicle savours so strongly of an earlier stage in civilization that we may be tempted to an exaggerated and pharisaical condemnation of our "barbarous" ancestors. On the other hand, it is sometimes pleaded in extenuation of similar recorded episodes that the story is impossible on the very face of it; that we must treat them not as history, but as romance. Human nature (it is argued) is the same or nearly the same in all ages; we know that many of these men were decent or even honourable in many of their other relations; we should find it hard to believe that anything so sordid lurks behind the religious façade of modern British society; it is ignoble, therefore, to believe that Thomas really meant what he said, or, if he did, that these Evesham doings were in any way characteristic of the institution and of the time. Thus we find the extreme anti-clerical and the whole-hearted apologist standing upon common ground; each judges the past too exclusively by the standard of our own age, regarding the thirteenth century through twentieth-century spectacles. Some measure of anachronism is doubtless unavoidable; a man cannot jump away from his own shadow. But there is one clue here which has been strangely neglected; the clue which a business-like outsider would at once suggest to the perplexed scholar who might consult him. If we ourselves do not know enough to venture upon a generalization at this distance of time, why not consult those who did know? those contemporaries who daily saw and talked with Religion in the flesh. Have you no such witnesses? common-sense will ask; and anybody who has read widely in pertinent medieval records will answer that we have many such. We may reject the heretic and the professional satirist altogether; even beyond this, we may be very exacting in our requirements, yet we shall find an almost embarrassing

multitude of unimpeachable authorities. Therefore we have here one of the easiest of a student's tasks: merely to "copy fair what time hath blurr'd; redeem truth from his jaws." We need no more than to marshal our witnesses in chronological order, omitting none of any importance, since, in a case like this, the main force of the evidence lies in its cumulative effect.

Yet we must be exacting; in each case we must require that the testimony should fulfil two conditions; it must be explicit, and it must be trustworthy. Vague generalities are no use here. From even the most glowing panegyric on the monastic ideal, we can no more infer the healthiness of actual monasticism in the writer's own time, than we could infer monastic debasement from an equally general lamentation over the omnipresent frailties of human nature. It may be seen, in fact, that those who most warmly extol the ideal in itself are generally most despairing as to the actual practice of the age in which they live. Again, I have eliminated, almost without exception, all descriptions of a past generation outside the writer's actual experience. Every age has been tempted to dream of some more glorious past; the Middle Ages, with their lack of historical materials and historical training, were peculiarly liable to this mirage. If we were to trust blindly here to the very greatest of medieval writers, we should be driven to conclude that morals and religion had gone through a steady process of debasement from the Christian era down to the Reformation; seldom do we find even a glimmer of hope that the writer's own age may really be as good as, or perhaps a shade better than, the imaginary past. Here and there we may find an author with some real historical equipment, like Abbot Trithem, who possessed documentary evidence for the past conditions which he describes; but, as a general rule, it is useless to hear witnesses who, without any pretence of adequate vouchers, ask us to take their word for better social conditions in remote times which they know only by hearsay. I have tried, therefore, to ensure that each witness brought here into court should have this double basis of adequacy. First, he must speak of what he really knows, either because he has seen and heard it around him in his own time, or because he can give us documentary vouchers. Secondly, his testimony must amount to a generalization; not, of course,

a complete and exhaustive generalization, but one sufficiently broad to assure us that what he describes is typical, or even normal. It is weary work, and seldom profitable, to count up exceptions. We might quote brilliant examples of monks from picked times or places, and, side by side with these, cite more numerous and more striking examples of monastic decay, since in the nature of things, certain classes of records deal more with failures than with successes. To balance the good against the bad here, detail by detail, would be a crushingly laborious and difficult task, if not altogether impossible. But why should a student spend a lifetime upon such generalizations as he may find ready-made for him by contemporary writers? Men of the greatest ecclesiastical distinction and of most unquestioned orthodoxy have, as a matter of fact, frequently generalized, each in his own day. They have written, as men who knew contemporary monasticism inside and out, for readers who had ample opportunities of checking their assertions, and who could scarcely have failed to raise some protest, if only here and there, against any generalization which was patently unfair. Such writers have characterized, not indeed all monks under the same colours, but either a majority, or at least a minority so great and so influential as to colour most strongly our conception of general monastic practice. Of such a kind are the testimonies briefly resumed in this and the next chapter, and printed more fully in Appendixes 34 and 36. In choosing them, I have never asked whether they were favourable or unfavourable, but simply whether they fulfilled these two conditions which historical method demands—explicitness and trustworthiness. They number considerably over a hundred, and I am convinced that many more could be found by wider reading. Be that as it may, we might reasonably ask whether there is any question of equal importance, in the whole social history of the Middle Ages, for which we have so great a cloud of witnesses. And the reader will remark not only their multiplicity but also their extraordinary variety. They testify from every generation of our period, and from almost every corner of Christendom<sup>1</sup>; yet,

<sup>1</sup> Here, as elsewhere, I am obliged to leave Spain and Portugal alone, having never found time for that peninsula; but historians seem to imply that conditions there were, on the whole, rather less regular than in England or France.

apart from their general agreement on the points which concern us here, it may almost be said that they have only two other important qualities in common—catholic orthodoxy, and direct contemporary knowledge<sup>1</sup>. Therefore their other differences lend added weight to their practical agreement upon the character of actual monasticism from St Bernard to the Reformation and beyond.

We have seen how Peter the Venerable, in the earlier half of the twelfth century, confessed to relaxations among his own Cluniacs, and how much more unfavourably he generalized on all the other Benedictine houses in the great province of Lyons<sup>2</sup>. His fellow-Cluniac, Bernard [of Morlaix], in a book dedicated to Peter, writes: "The clerical Order is fallen from its height, and the monastic from its citadel; the former is broken, the latter is dissolved and turned topsy-turvy." The archbishop of Cologne, in 1126, complained that his whole province contained scarcely one orderly nunnery. St Bernard [1140] speaks of true monasticism as almost extinct in Ireland, before St Malachy's revival. Gerhoh, provost of Reichersberg [1150], writes concerning "those abuses of modern wickedness which reign now in the nunneries not dwelling under apostolic doctrine but lying under the ruin of apostasy... It is shameful to say what they do in secret... the common apostolic life is altogether decayed." The Benedictine abbess, St Elizabeth of Schönau [1155], speaks of worldliness and impurities among Religious; they "fill the Church with scandals... Religion suffereth contempt, and faith is rent in twain." Her brother, Abbot Eckbert [1160], who knew his sister's mind, writes: "I beheld the nuns' convents; some of these I should rather call Satan's liming-twigs and decoy-cages... the lilies of chastity had withered"; some new Phineas is needed with his avenging spear. St Hildegard of Bingen [1160] says of the lay-brethren that "the greater part of them work neither by day nor by night, since they serve neither God nor the world perfectly." A Cistercian of [1170] describes the shock which a fervent novice receives when he

<sup>1</sup> The dates in *square* brackets are approximate; wherever I could ascertain the exact year of the document, this is given in *round* brackets. The words quoted in this chapter are distinguished by Clarendon type in Appendix 34, so that the reader may easily pick them out and judge them by their context.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, pp. 268-9.

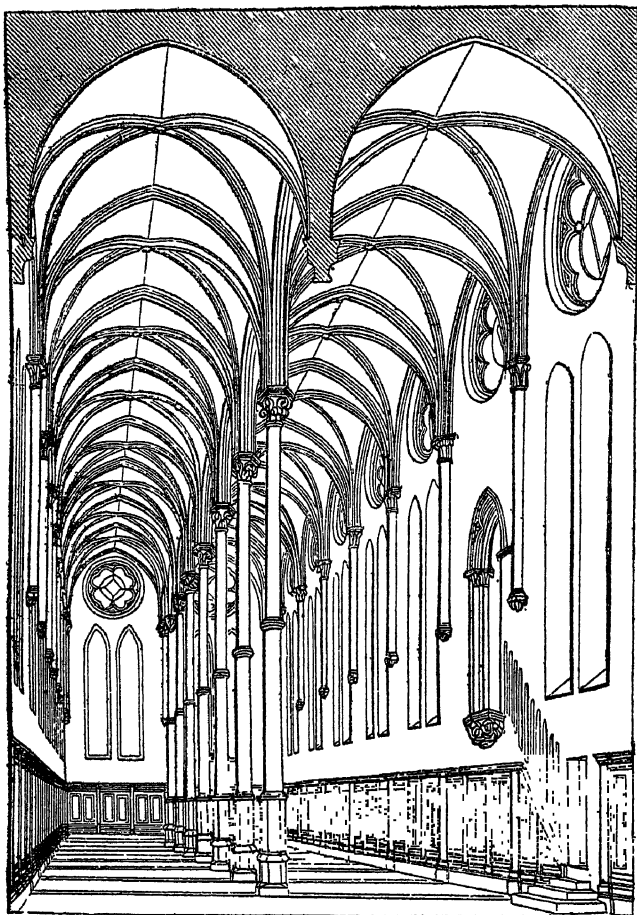
finds the laxity with which the Rule is actually interpreted in the average Benedictine monastery. About the same time, Abbot Philippe de Harvenge wrote enthusiastically about the still living reforms of Cîteaux and Prémontré, but even here he noted incidentally that some of these good monks' worst adversaries were to be found among the older Orders; and (in a passage which I have already quoted) he stigmatizes the worldliness of modern monasticism<sup>1</sup>. His contemporary, Peter of Blois [1180], laments the decay of hospitality in monasteries, the luxury and worldliness of exempt abbots, and the idleness, lukewarmness, and gluttony of their subjects. The evidence of Abailard, Joachim of Fiore and others for this twelfth century has already been quoted in Chapters II, VI and VII. Giraldus Cambrensis [1200] says so much about the monks that (as will be seen) I have no room even in the Appendix for more than a series of the briefest references. The Benedictine Order is in progressive corruption. Though the Cistercians are still distinguished by superior labour, abstinence and hospitality, yet they are greedy, ambitious and oppressive, swallowing up whole villages with their inhabitants, and letting parish churches go to ruin; moreover, in spite of their public abstinence, they sometimes live luxuriously in secret. The Cluniacs are notorious for gluttony; they live luxuriously even in public; they are in sore need of effective visitation, and Giraldus twice rehearses instances of their incontinence. Monks in general are not infrequently wasteful, gluttonous and intemperate, with the natural sequel of incontinence; they also are bad friends to the country parishes; and, though they fast in public, they feast in secret. Those of Ireland are specially corrupt. As to nuns, Giraldus expatiates on the scandals generated between them and the male Religious.

We come next to the thirteenth century. An anonymous Dominican (probably) has left a description of Alsace about the year 1200, in which he speaks of frequent unchastity among nuns. The monk Arnold tells us, in his *Chronicon Slavorum* (1209), that "possessions have grown [among Religious], and Religion hath vanished." Innocent III, in 1213, writes to the Cluniacs that "many, though not all," have lapsed; even Cluny

<sup>1</sup> Ch. I, p. 11.



is setting a pernicious example, and infecting society with corruption. Five years later, Honorius III speaks of the lamp of Religion as "almost extinct" in the ecclesiastical provinces of



Cluniac Refectory (St-Martin-des-Champs, Paris,  
thirteenth century)

Trèves and Lorraine<sup>1</sup>. A Benedictine General Chapter, at Angers, in 1220, proclaimed that "almost all Religion is deformed in these days of ours." Gregory IX, in 1231, spoke even

<sup>1</sup> Compare the evidence given in the third chapter of Sabatier's *Life of St Francis*.

more strongly concerning the Cluniacs: "They bring forth wild grapes, that set men's teeth on edge"; "this fallen Order." The same pope, in 1236, condemns "all" the Benedictines of the Cologne province as having "turned aside from the discipline of the Rule." All this time England was a little more regular in its ecclesiastical life, yet here also was much to be blamed. This same Gregory IX, in 1232, had complained that some of the exempt monasteries in the province of Canterbury were so "deformed spiritually and diminished in worldly possessions" that "Religion is blasphemed"; as to the other monasteries of that province, he hears that they are "enormously decayed, both spiritually and temporally, through the wickedness and carelessness of those who dwell therein."

With the coming of the friars, we naturally get more plain speech about the older Orders. St Antony of Padua, a Franciscan of the first generation (d. 1231), stigmatizes "quarrels in the chapterhouse, indiscipline in choir, murmurings in cloister, gluttony and intemperance in refectory, rebellion of the flesh in dormitory." "Covetousness hath now blackened almost all Religious." "The life of clerics and Religious hath left the heights of contemplation and moveth slothfully and stolidly along the plain of carnal pleasure." Abbots and priors who let their proud or drunken or lecherous monks go loose deserve the same death which Moses decrees for the master of a goring ox (Exod. xxi, 28). Earlier monks were real ascetics; nowadays "their belly waddles before them, their faces are ruddy, their sleep is assiduous and their prayers are null." Monasteries conceal the abominations described in Ezekiel viii, 9 ff. Monks rob the poor to enrich their own kinsfolk. It is time for Elijah to come and deal faithfully with these priests of Baal. Guillaume d'Auvergne, bishop of Paris from 1228 to 1249, is an enthusiastic supporter of the new Franciscans; where they have come, they have made a new world in Religion; under Lady Poverty, they are strong, but strong also (says Lady Poverty) is the army of "my Contrary"<sup>1</sup>. Where there is wealth, vice too often remains unpunished, the scourge hangs in the chapterhouse, but only

<sup>1</sup> This long personification of Lady Poverty and her Contrary, which I had to abridge greatly in my Appendix, is well worth reading as an anticipation of *Piers Plowman's* Lady Meed.

as a token of hypocrisy. Monks become moneychangers and hang about the lawcourts; their half-hearted and hurried services are an offence to God; many have been dumped by kinsfolk into the cloister as unceremoniously as superfluous puppies or piglings; monks who urge reform are persecuted by the laxer majority: "innumerable folk desert the habit of Religion." The Dominican preacher, Nicolas de Byard [1250], tells us that "many Religious grant their soul to the Devil as a market for trade." His far greater Franciscan contemporary, Berthold of Regensburg, is distressed to note "so many adulterous or disobedient folk, whether in cloisters or outside cloisters"; "*mali laici, mali Religiosi*." His Dominican contemporary, Albert the Great, commenting on the word *sirens*, explains that this signifies "nuns who with their deadly chants lure the souls that sail over the ocean of this world; such as shall be in the days of Antichrist, and, alas! such as now are." A Benedictine of Molesme, about the same time, wrote: "In these days of ours, scarce any man is to be found who feareth God." St Bonaventura, minister-general of the Franciscans [1260], admits that "all Religious Orders are failing in religious life, even if they seem to be progressing in worldly wealth and in certain ceremonial matters." His contemporary minister-general of the Dominicans, Humbert de Romans, deals far more fully with this subject; and it is noticeable that, by this time, writers often draw no explicit distinction between the new and the older Orders. "There are many Religious in whom almost all good things have perished. There are others who have kept some good, yet lost much; but they assert that everything is well done and executed among all." Some congregations "consist of unworthy persons only"—going "downwards to hell: and that which was once a way of salvation is now a road to perdition" (a phrase thrice repeated). Yet he lays special blame, as is natural, upon the older Orders. Their ignorance has been the cause of many evils; there has been "much uncleanness," the younger members have "perished for lack of spiritual food... sacraments were trodden underfoot." "Some Black Monks have nothing or hardly anything of Religion but the bare frock... far worse in wickedness than secular folk." Here, as with St Antony, we are again referred to Ezekiel viii; they "give horrible scandal to their neighbours."



HUMBERT DE ROMANS



Some plead in excuse that they must needs mix with the world; others plead long-standing custom for their transgressions; others plead the multitude of fellow-sinners. Many White Monks are still flourishing in religion, yet some are Devil's sheep, as bad or worse than the Black; good folk are moved to tears. Nuns, forgetting the frailty of their sex, "frequently fall into sin." Humbert even proposed, in the Ecumenical Council of Lyons (1274), a considerable scheme of disendowment for decayed abbeys and priories "in which sometimes a handful of monks are leading a scandalous life"<sup>1</sup>. Another contemporary Dominican is the great cardinal, Hugues de St-Cher, who contributed almost more than any other single person to the institution of the new feast of Corpus Christi in 1264. While explicitly protesting against exaggerated criticism of Religious, and showing great sympathy for merely occasional lapses, he gives no brighter picture than Humbert. Regulars, like seculars, are shamed by "greed and pride and incontinence"; "clerics are worse than lay folk, and Religious worse than Seculars." Too many take the cowl "to fill their bellies"; monasteries batten on gifts from rich sinners, and neglect the poor; the very stones cry out against them from the walls of their splendid buildings; it may even be said that "clerics and Religious flay the naked with rapine and exactions." They are inadequately disciplined; visitors come less to amend the convents than to fill their own bellies: "therefore the monks suffer from fleshly vices; a thing human indeed, but grievous." Some are whited sepulchres; "clerics and Religious... are lecherous, proud, and avaricious." This great institution is now so decayed that "where of old there were a hundred monks, now there are scarce a score"<sup>2</sup>. "Devotion is withered"; "studies are perishing"; "many cloak the filthiness of their life under the name and

<sup>1</sup> In spite of the great reputation enjoyed by Lecoy de la Marche, it is impossible to treat seriously his apologetic argument on p. 366 of *La Chaire française au M.A.* (2nd ed.). He devotes a page (p. 132) to this book of Humbert, yet ignores his criticism of the monks; nay, he actually argues from the supposed absence of such criticisms as a proof of monastic innocence, and accuses Daunou of not having actually read the book (p. 133).

<sup>2</sup> These figures must not be taken as mathematically accurate; but we have the plainest evidence for considerable diminutions of numbers, which were falling off steadily long before the Black Death came to hasten this downward trend.

habit of Religion." Modern monasticism is like Christ's sepulchre; "nothing is found but empty clothes," or like the bolster of goats' hair which Michal dressed up in David's bed to deceive Saul. "Religion hath abandoned holiness and heaped up an abundance of worldly things"; "the whole heart of the Church is corrupt and infected, and therefore is the body sick." About the same time, in 1267, the papal legate in Austria reported that the Benedictines there "are leading a very dissolute life, to the peril of their own souls and the scandal of very many folk." Next year, in England, the legate Othobon explained the reasons for his reforming decrees, "because this holy Religion [mainly of St Benedict, but also including other Orders], . . . hath slid into luxury, and gone miserably aside into the broad way that leadeth unto death." And Roger Bacon wrote in 1271 to the pope: "Let us look at the Religious; I make exception for no Order. Let us see how each is fallen from its proper estate, and the new Orders<sup>1</sup> are now horribly fallen from their original dignity. The whole clergy is bent upon pride, lechery and covetousness." At the same time, another Franciscan, Ludovicus, came to this subject repeatedly in his mission sermons. He also specified "lechery and avarice," and "concupiscence." Black Monks and Cistercians are decayed; the friars themselves cannot restore the world; religion is lukewarm, and lukewarm Religious are worse than other folk. St Gertrude, shortly before or after 1300, felt that "the house of Religion is now tottering to ruin almost throughout the whole world."

An English Royal Statute of 1306-7 deals with the alien priories, in which "almsgiving and other works of hospitality are ceasing," and "no little scandal groweth among the people." Pierre Dubois, royal advocate, complained to the pope in 1307 that the small priories were haunts of lechery and drunkenness, and that impunity was frequent. The nuns, again, "commit many crimes, both natural and sometimes unnatural"; no prudent man should take the risks of a nunnery for his daughter. In 1310, the Cluniac Chapter General repeated Peter the Venerable's complaint, that unsatisfactory recruits were now "almost the majority in the Order." In 1311, the bishop of Angers complained to the Ecumenical Council of Vienne against

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* the friars; Bacon was himself a Franciscan.

the grievous sins committed in small priories, the scandal of the people, and the "iniquities [in exempt Orders] whereof I must not speak." His even greater colleague at that Council, Bishop Durand, is equally unfavourable; monks live no better than worldly folk; they are idle; "they transgress with impunity"; and, in short, "the monastic Order now lieth almost prostrate." At this same Council, Ubertino da Casale spoke in defence of his own party, the Franciscan Spirituals. He thus characterized the other party, the Conventuals, who were by far the more numerous section of the Order: "so great hath been the flood of idleness and gluttony and continual familiarities with women, that I marvel more at those who stand than at those who fall." Between this date and 1321 Dante wrote his *Paradiso*; there he deals in detail with the Benedictines, Franciscans and Dominicans of his own day (cantos 11, 12, 22). No Benedictine now climbs the old steep ladder of the Rule; "the walls which were wont to be a house of prayer have become dens"; monastic revenues are wasted on "kindred, or other filthier thing"; any thorough reversal of this general monastic backsliding would be a greater miracle than the turning back of Jordan's waters or of the Red Sea. His early commentator, Benvenuto da Imola, Chaucer's contemporary and professor at Bologna, protests against a too general application of these words: "Note that the poet seems here to speak too broadly; for even now there are many monks living very holy lives, to all appearance, as I have seen myself in some places; for example, among the brethren of Monte Oliveto"—a small and strictly-reformed Order which was then only half a century old. Perhaps, adds Benvenuto, Dante's blame should be restricted to St Benedict's own monastery of Monte Cassino, with which at that moment the poet is primarily dealing. Yet, he admits that Dante's later words amount "to one general conclusion, which is true of all Religious Orders and Rules in the world; *viz.* that they begin well, but do not long persevere." Dante (says Benvenuto) is describing the change "in the Benedictines from contemplative to voluptuous." And he recounts Boccaccio's experience at Monte Cassino, where the library was found to be a scene of ruin, filth and peculation. Upon this, God's vengeance must some day fall. Dante's son, Pietro, in his much briefer commentary, says nothing



to restrict his father's blame; while Francesco Buti (professor at Pisa, writing about 1380) is distinctly less merciful to the monks than Benvenuto. For Buti, while expounding Dante's complaints against the Dominicans and Franciscans, says nothing to soften his words, and he concludes: "Those two most excellent Orders of Friars Preachers and Minors, who were once the two brightest lights of this world, are now under grievous eclipse, and are sinking towards the horizon." In 1330-1, the Cluniac authorities besought Edward III's interference for the reform of their Order in England, "ill-governed both spiritually and temporally." The numbers had sunk to one-third, visitation was neglected, and the relaxed majority were so vindictive against would-be reformers that "no man dareth to speak of Religion." This, of course, was partly due to the wars, which cut the English branches off from the main Cluniac trunk in France. The Dominican, Ludolph of Saxony, in his *Vita Christi* [1330], complains that, too often, "nothing is left of true Religion but words and outward habit"; "many [Religious, at the Last Day] have reason to fear that these [three essential] vows will be found broken or ill-kept"<sup>1</sup>; "we must fear that [the Orders] will be cut down" like the barren fig-tree. In 1336-7, Benedict XII set himself seriously to reform monasticism, as Gregory IX had done just a century before. His biographer gives his reasons; "very many Religious were neglecting their Rules"; the Benedictine Order "was in many respects almost ruined." Yet Clement VI, in 1343, excuses his policy of emasculating these recent reforms by pleading that the statutes of Benedict XII had been constantly violated. About the same time, the monk Ranulf Higden of Chester complains that monastic endowments "be now more wasted in gluttony and riot of [their] owners than in sustenance and help of needy men and of guests." The Cambridge canonist, John of Ayton [1340], marks a definite descent even from Othobon's judgement of 1268. He protests that he speaks not for the sake of disparagement, but in the hope of stimulating to reform; the Benedictines especially, but other Orders also, are now going down the broad way of death; neither the Rule nor canon law nor the fear of

<sup>1</sup> I.e. the *tria essentialia* of poverty, obedience and chastity, to which monastic writers constantly refer.

God has sufficed to restrain their backslidings: the Lord, it is to be feared, will give their vineyard over to other husbandmen. About this same time, the *Encyclopaedia* called *Omne Bonum* tells us that monks "often" conspire against reforming superiors, are idle, and cause scandal by their "familiarity with women, and especially with nuns." The great Dominican mystic, Suso, wrote, in 1338, that religion is in ruins, relaxations have become a settled custom, and those who would do well are too often held back by the majority, so that "swine now wallow where holy angels were wont to dwell." His Franciscan contemporary, Alvarus Pelagius, is, on the whole, the most plain-spoken and pessimistic of all our witnesses up to this point. His *Lament of the Church* was finished in 1340. As papal penitentiary (and, later, bishop), he knew every side of Church life; moreover, he was a staunch champion of papal claims, and wrote at a pope's command. The worst sore of society (he says) is the example given to the laity by clergy and Religious. Monasteries swallow up parishes, thus depriving the poor of proper religious ministrations; their main faults may be reckoned at forty, and in this formidable catalogue Alvarus repeats all we have already heard from other churchmen—"lechery and pride and covetousness and gluttony and other mortal sins"—to which he adds smaller items from his own experience. Few there be that follow the narrow way of fasting and abstinence that leads to chastity; for "the Religious of our day are commonly belly-gods." Apostasy is frequent, but one of the worst evils is that of familiarity between Religious and nuns, where unchastity is common under the mask of religious direction. The abbesses dare not interfere, dreading the guilty parties' vengeance; "the nun who has no such devotee—nay, seducer—holdeth herself as one deserted." The so-called poverty of friars is too often a sham; "nowadays, many Religious are successors to the Pharisees in their vices"; it is to be feared that "the Day of Doom is at our very doors." We must, of course, make allowance here for rhetoric, though this seems more exaggerated in the present brief summary than in the longer extracts which may be found in the Appendix. There, and in other passages of the book, the reader may find evidence that Alvarus constantly speaks from actual experience, especially in his own Order; and that, under his violent language,

the main facts are such as he would have steadily maintained under cross-examination. Our last witness before the Plague is the great Dominican mystic, Johann Tauler, who, within a few months of the Black Death, described Mother Church as "growing old and almost decrepit," and monks as falling "not infrequently" into mortal and unrepented sin.

With this Black Death, we come to a natural division of the subject. Unquestionably the plague carried off something like half the population, and affected social life in many ways. On the other hand, there has been a strong temptation to employ it as a *deus ex machina*, alleging this Black Death as cause of some things which may be puzzling to us, and others which probably never happened at all. Even so learned and careful an historian as Haller seems to treat these exaggerations more seriously than they deserve<sup>1</sup>. One rule, I think, will be found to hold good almost universally: the Black Death shook everything more or less; therefore it hastened the decay of whatever was already decadent; while strong and growing institutions soon flourished again, and, perhaps, all the more vigorously for this temporary trial. I am not aware that any evil custom has ever been shown to have first started from this plague, or any good custom to have been killed by it; using *good* and *evil* here, of course, not in any disputable party sense but in the more clearly agreed sense of *social* and *anti-social*. For the contrary, on the other hand, there is definite proof in one field at least. It would be difficult to find any more sudden and dramatic conclusion than we find in the episcopal registers, for the time-honoured abuse of boy-rectors. In Exeter diocese, before the plague, far more than half the livings in lay presentation were given to persons not in Holy Orders; in most cases these were probably mere boys, whose actual parish work was being done by underpaid curates. The plague, by halving the numbers of the clergy and demanding incumbents who had at least the priestly powers of saying Mass and pronouncing absolution, now gave the curates their chance; nearly all institutions were now institutions of actual priests, and the ground thus won was never really lost again: the boy-rector becomes no longer the

<sup>1</sup> *Papsttum u. Kirchenreform*, vol. I, 1903, p. 9.

rule but the exception<sup>1</sup>. So also the plague hastened the decay of the manorial system, by giving the labourers a temporary advantage of which even the reaction after 1381 could not totally deprive them. Yet, while feudalism was thus decaying, the towns were growing more rapidly, and were striking deeper roots of solid prosperity after the plague than before<sup>2</sup>. Education, again, spread more steadily among the people; scholasticism may not have gone on from strength to strength, but medicine did, and the universities flourished numerically<sup>3</sup>. Gothic art decayed, but this decadence is definitely traceable to times before the plague; that last and most mechanical style which we call Perpendicular was invented at Gloucester abbey church in 1337, and few critics would put the work even of 1300 on a level with that of 1250. Such, in an even more marked degree, would seem to be the evidence with regard to monastic life. True, it was decadent after the Black Death, but it was already plainly decadent before. A few observers, even then, had begun to prophesy a catastrophe<sup>4</sup>. These men were beginning to see the monasteries with the same eyes with which Fénelon and Vauban saw the *Ancien Régime* in France. Nearly all the religious houses were in debt<sup>5</sup>; the first reforming energy of the friars was plainly spent, and no man saw his way to any fresh principle of regeneration. None such was in fact discovered until the Jesuits came. During the plague itself, cloistered religion did nothing remarkable to justify its extraordinary claims and privileges. Nobody, so far as I know, has attempted seriously to prove—as apart from asserting in the air—that monks and

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 19–20 of my *Medieval Studies*, no. 8, *Priests and People before the Reformation*. Cardinal Gasquet's statistics for the city of Winchester, though true for that very small area, are extremely misleading for a generalization: it is quite contrary to the general facts (or even to the facts of the whole diocese of Winchester) to assert that "in normal times very few were ordained after their appointment as incumbents" (1st ed. p. 206).

<sup>2</sup> See especially R. Hoeniger, *Der schwarze Tod in Deutschland*, Berlin, 1882, p. 95, where evidence is given from the town chronicles and account-books to show that the later fourteenth century was a time of steady, and sometimes even exceptional, growth. This book is by far the most scientific study of the subject which I have seen; unfortunately for us, the author limits himself to Germany.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hoeniger, *l.c.* p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> Hugues de St-Cher, Benvenuto da Imola, Ludolph of Saxony, John of Ayton, Alvarus Pelagius.

<sup>5</sup> Snape, chap. v, *passim*.

friars and nuns died, on the whole, in disproportionate numbers. It is sometimes asserted that they showed special devotion; but, here again, without adequate proof, and in spite of explicit contemporary assertions to the contrary<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, if the clergy had earned special gratitude during this visitation, it would be difficult to account for what we know of their unpopularity shortly afterwards<sup>2</sup>.

The most instructive document here, perhaps, is the *Chronicle* of Gilles li Muisis, abbot of St-Martin-de-Tournai. He died at a great age in 1353, but wrote between 1349 and 1352, when the plague was still fresh in all minds: for it had first attacked Flanders in August 1349. He expressly attributes the scourge to the wickedness of his own and past generations; and, though he notes reactions both towards good and towards evil, he gives no hint, I believe, of any essential cleavage between pre-plague and post-plague monasticism. It is pretty evident that the criticisms which I shall have to quote from him in my next chapter are such as he would have applied, in very much the same words, to things as they were on the brink of the Black Death<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, the many medieval writers who suggest causes for the Black Death are unanimous, so far as I know, in attributing it to God's vengeance for an accumulation of past sins in Church and State.

And, quite apart from these explicit records, even if we were left entirely to *a priori* speculations, it would be difficult to find solid justification for the modern theory that the Black Death

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 35. Quite apart from the contemporaries who tell us that "all men" deserted the plague-stricken patients, something like a dozen chroniclers record that the clergy avoided them like other folk; and three of these expressly specify Religious. Only one chronicler gives an unqualified testimonial to the friars, and he was himself a friar, writing something like ten years after the first plague, and confining his statements to Sicily (Michael Platiensis, in R. Gregorio, *Bib. Scriptorum, etc.* vol. 1, pp. 562 ff.). Another, writing in Paris, tells us that "in many towns, small and great, the priests retreated in fear, leaving the administration [of the Sacraments] to a few [*aliquibus*] Religious, who were braver. To the Sisters of the Hôtel-Dieu at Paris he gives the warmest and most unqualified testimonial (*Cont. Guil. de Nangis*, ed. Soc. Hist. de France, vol. II, pp. 211 ff.). The pope, on the other hand, shut himself up in a chamber of his palace at Avignon, with great fires for disinfection, and refused access to all men (Böhmer, *Fontes*, vol. IV, p. 261). Jessopp's vague claims for the clergy are not even borne out by the facts of his own diocese of Norwich.

<sup>2</sup> Lea, *Inq. in Middle Ages*, vol. II, p. 383; Hoeniger, pp. 114, 119.

<sup>3</sup> See his chronicle in de Smet, vol. II, pp. 334-5, 347-8, 364.

debased true religion, or that it broke down time-honoured barriers against falsehood and immorality. Typical of this theory are two quotations from living writers:

"The Reformation, using the term in its widest and most comprehensive sense, was really inaugurated by the Black Death." "It is a well-ascertained fact, strange as it may seem, that men are not as a rule made better by great and universal visitations of Divine Providence... Many a noble aspiration which, could it have been realised, and many a wise conception which, could it have attained its development, would have been most fruitful of good to humanity, was stricken beyond recovery [by this Pestilence]"<sup>1</sup>.

This conception of Providence, under careful analysis, does indeed seem even stranger than the writer seems to anticipate. Christian thought has generally followed St Paul: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able"; ours is a life in which trials are as stepping-stones to higher things. In contradiction to this Christian teaching, we are now asked to believe that, in 1348, God tried the Catholic Church beyond her ability to resist. In that year the Almighty, untaught by many failures in the past, committed perhaps the greatest blunder in all recorded history: "the collapse of medieval civilization was both accelerated and exaggerated [in 1348] by the most fearful calamity that has ever befallen the human race." This providential visitation so shook the Church (and especially those most important of ecclesiastical fortresses, the monasteries) that, when a lewd and wrong-headed German friar came forward in 1517, his appearance inflicted irreparable damage upon an institution still reeling from that well-intended, but grossly miscalculated providential blow of two centuries earlier. From this second blow of 1517 religion still suffers, and the evil seems rather growing than diminishing. Seventeen generations, over half the surface of the Western world, have lived and died under degraded religious and moral conditions; and all because the Religious of 1348 were spiritually demoralized by the sudden removal of half their number to another world, and economically paralyzed by seeing their enormous revenues dwindle at the same rate which affected other landlords. Whatever outward gloss we put upon it, does

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 35.

not the theory amount in essence to that? Is it not therefore less dishonouring to God and man, as well as more consonant with ordinary probabilities, to accept the overwhelming evidence of medieval records, and to conclude that what happened here was only what in human nature we should have expected? Where the shock found discipline already lax, it loosened the bonds still farther; where the economic crisis fell upon houses that were already in debt, it dragged them into still deeper embarrassments.

Moreover, the direct medieval evidence given in this chapter agrees with the judgement of two modern scholars who approach the question from a very different angle. Professor Mode of Chicago, in a valuable thesis, writes: "May it not be questioned whether the religious houses in the earlier part of the fourteenth century had been attracting young men to their cloisters? Is it possible that the cloister had lost its appeal, so far as young men were concerned?"<sup>1</sup> And this question is directly answered, from documents with which Professor Mode was not concerned, by Mr R. H. Snape<sup>2</sup>. In the seven English houses from which he has found records of numbers between the Conquest and the Black Death, the monks fell from 460 to 225, or over 51 per cent.; in thirteen houses which can be similarly traced between the plague and the Reformation, the fall was only 38 per cent. The statistics of debt, so far as they survive, tell a similar tale: "The accumulated evidence of [earlier] financial difficulties is such as to throw grave doubt upon any theory which represents the English monasteries as continuously flourishing and prosperous until they are overwhelmed by the Black Death."

<sup>1</sup> P. G. Mode, *The Influence of the Black Death on the English Monasteries*. Privately distributed by the Univ. of Chicago Libraries, 1916, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> *English Monastic Finances, etc.*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1926, pp. 21-2, 120.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### A CATENA OF GENERALIZATIONS (2)

YET, even when all exaggerations have been swept away, the Black Death does mark a real epoch; and it is logical to break off for a moment at this point. So far as our special subject is concerned, the records will presently yield more numerous and more unfavourable judgements; and it will be evident that the catastrophe has hastened the process of decay which it had not initiated. Other unfavourable factors will be the Hundred Years' War, the transference of the papacy to Avignon, the Great Schism, and the Hussite war in Germany. But in those matters, at any rate, the problem is simpler; it was human error which brought England to fight France, and the pope to leave Rome, and the discontented cardinals to choose those anti-popes who divided Christian allegiance. The fatalist, therefore, must here lay the blame not on God's regrettable miscalculations but on the constitution and character of medieval society; of that same society which had evolved monasticism as one of its most characteristic products.

Our list of witnesses must begin, as the last ended, with Gilles li Muisis<sup>1</sup>. Though he implies clearly enough that the evil did not begin with the plague, yet by far his fullest criticisms of monasticism cannot strictly be applied to the earlier period; they describe the institution as he saw it around him in the three years immediately following the catastrophe. There is still much good in monasticism; but there is so much evil also that he does not venture here to disclose all the truth. Riches have come to the monks, and religion is fled; many monks go to hell; learning perishes; nuns have their love-affairs; the friars are losing popularity more and more; all Orders are decayed; "God sleepeth, so say some folk"; but His vengeance is only delayed. Pierre Berchoire, prior of St-Éloi-de-Paris, wrote under a cardinal's patronage about 1360: "there are many [Religious] who give way in excess to lechery and uncleanness"; such, in fact,

<sup>1</sup> For fuller evidence all through this chapter, see Appendix 36.



are "innumerable"; the Devil plays havoc with Religion as Antiochus did with the temple of Jerusalem. An anonymous clerical poet, about the same time, is inclined to think that this would be a better world without monks, nuns or Bèguines. John Ruysbroeck, canon of Brussels, prior of Grünthal, and mystic inspirer of the Brethren of Common Life [1360], complained of steadily increasing decadence in all the Orders; Satan is now master of the world; Religious wear his livery of "uncharity and unchastity and disobedience"; they are gluttonous and slothful to boot. "Some [Religious] are of good-will, simple, holy; and these are held of no account." At matins, scarcely more than one in ten are present, the rest are in their beds<sup>1</sup>. Few friars keep the Rule, and even these do so for reputation's sake. "They flatter sinners...they seek the wool rather than the sheep"; some have their lady-devotees who pay them well; they persecute their stricter brethren who try to keep the Rule. "All Orders are decayed...except those folk who are strictly enclosed, such as the Carthusians and all the nuns of enclosed convents; these do cling more closely to their beginnings." The Benedictine Peter Visselbec [1370] exclaims: "O! how is our Order turned topsy-turvy! how little is it Benedictus!" The Florentine, Sacchetti, in one of his sermons, alludes to Dante's criticisms, and adds for his own account: "Most of the Religious follow after lechery, avarice, simony and gluttony." St Brigitta of Sweden, princess and founder of a great monastery, spent her money in the hope that this might set an example of reform [1370]; for "those who are now in monasteries...are no longer God's soldiers but Satan's, and shall have the Devil's wages." There are "very few monks in choir at divine service, and sometimes none at all"; "their Rules have been changed to detestable abuses"; monks are scarcely recognizable even by their habit, they scandalize good folk and encourage sinners. As for the nuns, "their doors are open, even by night itself, to clergy and laity indiscriminately...such convents resemble brothels rather than hallowed cloisters." St Francis did indeed change the world for a while; but "the Devil presently breathed his own spirit into other friars," and the majority are now

<sup>1</sup> In my next volume I shall have occasion to corroborate this by the statistical evidence of official visitors.

following not Francis's Rule, but Satan's: hell shall be their portion. The Strassburg banker-mystic, Rulman Merswin [1370], acknowledges that "honourable friars are to be found, that I will not gainsay, but right few." They plead that mankind has degenerated, we cannot live so strictly as our forefathers. The nunneries are too often corrupt; "inward earnest spiritual life is altogether forgotten by the nuns"; the serious Christian must avoid them; "many sorts of sins are done in these nunneries, both secretly and openly." "Earnest monasteries are right few and far between, which is monstrous." Both in women's and in men's houses the strict inmates are a laughing-stock. Light is thrown upon this by a statute of the bishop of Strassburg in 1435, enumerating three nunneries which claim to have freed themselves from time immemorial from the observance even of the three substantial vows; he decrees excommunication henceforth against any superior of these nunneries who dances publicly in taverns. Bishop William of Wykeham, spending his money not on monasteries but on two colleges, gave as his reason: "Nowhere have I found such [monastic Rules, etc.] observed now as of old according to the Founder's intentions." St Catharine of Siena wrote, in 1378, the *Dialogue* between Christ and her own soul. In this she speaks so plainly that the authorized Roman Catholic translation silently omits those fourteen chapters, or thirty-six quarto pages, in which the saint most fully expresses her judgement on the clergy and Religious of her own day<sup>1</sup>. Christ strikes the keynote in His very first sentence. Hitherto He has spoken to her of Church life in earlier and purer days; at last He must come to present actualities:

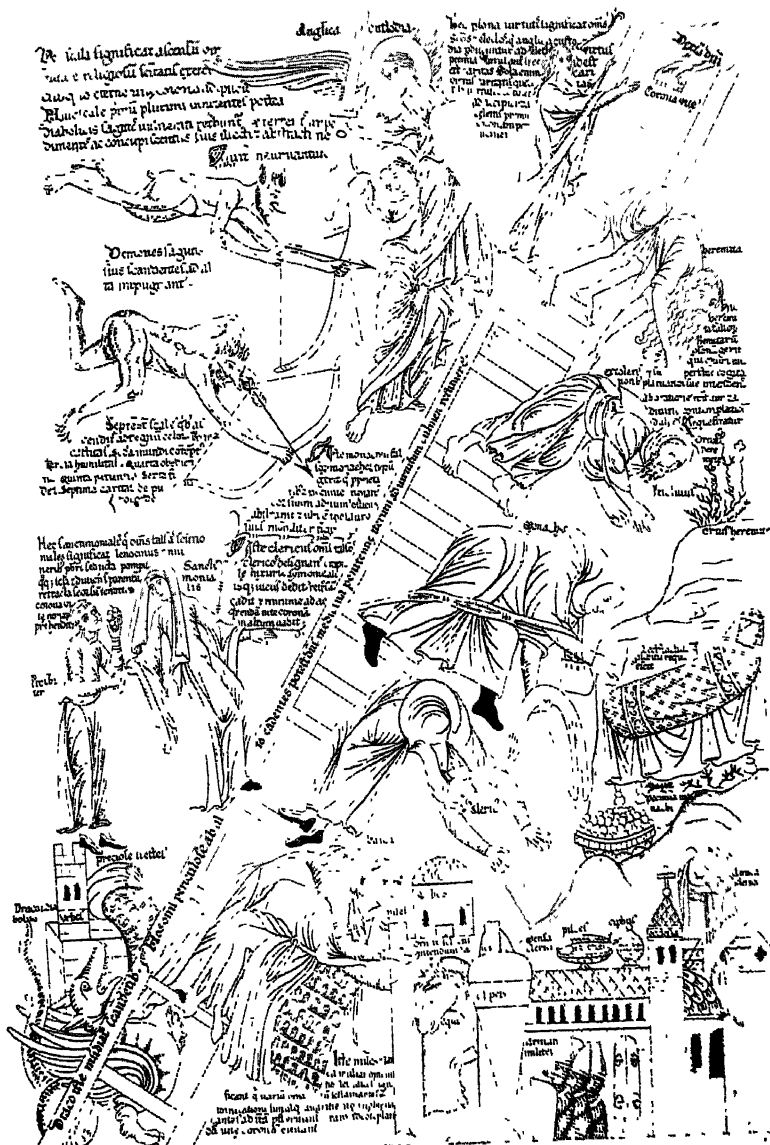
"I will now show and tell thee their wicked life; though indeed [thou needest not to hear from me, since] on whatsoever side thou mayest turn, both to secular clergy and Religious and prelates, small and great, old and young, and of all other sorts, thou seest naught else but offences, and all stink in My nostrils with a stench of mortal sin." "Narrow, greedy and avaricious to the poor...they have abandoned the cure of souls...not only do they not distribute, but they rob others." "Making a god of their belly, eating and drinking in disorderly fashion, thence they fall forthwith into filth, living in

<sup>1</sup> For the disingenuous methods by which these startling omissions have been camouflaged, see Appendix 36.

lasciviousness...feeding their children with the substance of the poor." "They are devils incarnate"; "They are worse than demons."

Lay folk are thus led to despise the Sacraments. Demons incarnate from the men's houses foregather with demons incarnate in nunneries; it ends in open apostasy; "he is become a ruffian, and she a harlot." "Not only do they themselves not keep the Rule, but they fall like famished wolves upon those lambs that would fain keep it." "They flee from choir-service as from poison." These gluttons cannot keep the vow of continence; there are other evils "whereof I will not speak lest I poison thine ears"; yet in a later chapter (124) St Catharine speaks of sodomy as a frequent offence. The monastic system is in itself good; it was founded by the Holy Ghost; St Catharine shared the almost universal medieval belief that it was a definitely apostolic institution. But Religious "are multiplied in numbers, and diminished in virtue." The majority, perhaps, are neither good nor bad; but, of the two extremes, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that the saint looks upon the "devils incarnate" as more numerous than the truly good.

A remarkable English contemporary was the Dominican, John Bromyard, one of Wyclif's most determined adversaries. Religious of bygone days, he writes, would indignantly disown their modern descendants. "Those who should be the fathers of the poor...covet delicate food and enjoy morning sleep." "Very few deign to vouchsafe their bare presence to matins or Mass," or, if they attend, it is with laughter and irreverence. "They are consumed in gluttony and drunkenness, in [soft] couches, not to say in uncleanness, so that now the assemblies of clerics are thought to be brothels of wanton folk and congregations of play-actors." Some buy themselves off from correction; Religious "are now become blind leaders of the blind; and, where all are filthy, the stench of any one is little felt." Therefore public charity grows colder towards them. All Orders alike (writes this friar of Chaucer's and Langland's day) are fallen; even his own comparatively recent Dominicans, who have become luxurious and "take the children's bread and cast it to their horses." The Orders are now so corrupt that they have reduced the body of Lady Church to a mass of sores. Recruiting is defective; rich folk "give their putrid food to the poor, and



THE LADDER OF SALVATION



their useless brood to God"; the deformed child is thrust into the cloister. "Religious do not feed the Lord through hospitality to the poor, but rather deceive them." "There is no talk of the scriptures or of the salvation of souls, but trifles and laughter and idle speech." All this Bromyard confesses unwillingly, but he owes homage to truth; "I speak against no Order... I must be considered to dispute not against the Orders, but in defence of order, so long as I reprehend not the Order among men, but the vices of men." Almost exactly contemporary, again, was "the moral Gower," Chaucer's friend and fellow-poet. In his *Mirour de l'Homme* he deals first with the older Orders; each original virtue is represented nowadays by its corresponding vice; dan Charity is slain by dan Envy; dan Hate has driven dan Unity out of the cloister. "Dan Unchaste shall go from manor to manor at his own pleasure, taking with him dan Incontinence... dan Vice is abbot at present." The old monastic Rule has given place to gluttony and drunkenness; and those who live thus can hardly be chaste: they call their children their nephews. Nuns are too often seduced by the priests who visit them. As for the friars, "they go from bad to worse even beyond all the rest." The fault of the bad is not a reason for condemning the good; but, on a rough generalization, we must say that their primitive Rule is forgotten by all four Orders alike. They are a danger to the purity of family life; they are modern Pharisees; their total suppression is not desirable, but they are too numerous, and they ought to be kept under proper discipline.

Pope Gregory XII, in 1408, found that the twenty-two Benedictine nunneries of Friesland had coalesced with the neighbouring men's houses so as to form establishments married in all but name; the children often became monks and nuns in their turn; abortion and infanticide and gluttony and drunkenness were rife<sup>1</sup>. The University of Oxford, in 1414, petitioned Henry V partly against the Lollard heretics, partly against current ecclesiastical abuses. "Exempt Religious, at the Devil's instigation, are frequently defiled with carnal vices, nor are they punished by their superiors"; let the bishops be given power

<sup>1</sup> The visitor, Johann Busch, came across a similar community a generation later (ed. Grube, p. 403).

to punish at least those who sin outside the cloister. Cardinal Zabarella spoke at the Council of Constance (1414) of "the too frequent lapses" of monks and nuns who had been thrust into monasteries as boys and girls. Theobald, another of the chosen speakers at that council (1417), stigmatized "the pride, lechery and covetousness of clerics and Religious." They no longer take the vows from real devotion; they "seduce maidens, matrons and nuns"; their superiors are bribed, and wink at all this. "What follows is shameful to tell, but far more shameful to do"; "lay folk are so scandalized that they are almost losing their faith." In 1419, the abbot of St-Maxence complained to the pope that, owing to the wars, "almost the whole monastic Order in [Poitou] is almost in ruins." In 1421, the prior of Mountgrace, who had left Benedictinism for the stricter Carthusian Order, reported to Henry V "that monastic Religion had fallen from its primitive institutions and observances"; one of the two Benedictine chroniclers who report the incident does indeed tell us that Henry was pleased to find so many "literates and graduates" among them; but both, when we read between the lines, show that the prior was right. Jean Gerson was perhaps the greatest Churchman of this whole century; he was writing mainly between 1400 and 1420. The light of Religion, he says, is "for the greater part obscured, not to say extinguished"; even at Rome, many monasteries are in ruins; some nunneries are mere brothels, and such girls or boys as are taught there learn worse lessons than they would learn from harlots. And one sentence goes far to explain all Church politics for the next four generations: "The Church is eaten up as with an incurable cancer, and the very remedies do but make her sick." Here, quite clearly, is the note which will thenceforth come again and again until the deed follows upon the repeated word, and half Europe breaks into revolution. Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly, second only to Gerson among the councillors of Bâle, in a long paragraph dealing with monastic decay, quoted that terrible sentence from Caesarius of Heisterbach: "The Church is come to such a state that she is not fit to be ruled but by men doomed to hell"<sup>1</sup>. Johann Nider of Bâle, Dominican, Inquisitor, and prominent ecclesiastical statesman, wrote about the same time as

<sup>1</sup> E. Brown, *Fascic.* vol. 1, p. 413.

Gerson and d'Ailly. He, also, says distinctly that one great difficulty of reform is in the length and depth of the decay; unless the greatest care be exercised, the whole edifice will collapse when we touch it. "Good Religious are very few in comparison with the bad"; "monasteries in these days are most grievously decayed in Religion"; "the nuns sometimes prostitute themselves abominably"; unreformed Religious ask why they, rather than so many others in like position, should be interfered with; and the would-be reformer knows not where to begin. He can only do as Nider is doing—speak the plain truth without fear or favour, and hope that it may bear some fruit<sup>1</sup>. The Council of Bâle, in 1439, set itself to attempt a general reform for the reason that "Regular discipline and the holiness of Religion are almost altogether ruined, and have miserably fallen, to the grievous scandal of the whole Order of Black Monks"; monasticism shows now "no image of her earlier sanctity." Two years later, Henry VI of England had to interfere in rebuke of the Carmelite Order: "Discipline is despised... Religion is defiled," and the impunity of sinners causes "very great scandal and horror" among the public (1441). From about this time comes the anonymous tract which was frequently, though wrongly, attributed to one of the great ecclesiastical statesmen at Constance—Nicolas de Clémanges, archdeacon of Bayeux. Apart from the violence of language, there is little or nothing which any councillor of Constance might not have written. All monasteries are falling into decay and ruin; impunity is an encouragement to restlessness, indiscipline and lechery; the writer is ashamed to repeat all that he knows. "What, pray, are the nunneries of today but execrable brothels of Venus instead of sanctuaries of God, and dens in which wanton and shameless youths satisfy their lusts?" St Bernardino of Siena died in 1444; his public sermons touch here and there upon monastic life. He is specially severe upon the nunneries, which certainly seem to have been rather worse in Italy than in any other great country, and decidedly worse than they were in England. Parents (he says) use them as almshouses

<sup>1</sup> Pastor, by quoting a few sentences at second-hand from Nider, suppressing the context and ignoring his far plainer speech in other places, gives a most misleading impression of his real evidence (*Hist. Popes*, tr. Antrobus, vol. 1, pp. 355-6). See Appendix 36.



for the less attractive daughters, whom they dedicate "as the scum or vomit of the world, I would I might say to God and not to the Devil." There they behave as may be expected; parents who want their daughters to keep straight should watch the nunnery by day and by night. And, in one sweeping generalization: "Very many folk, regarding the wicked lives of Religious and clergy, are thus led to waver—nay, sometimes to fail—in faith, believing in nothing higher than their own roofs." His contemporary, St Antonino, archbishop of Florence, writes that "All the Orders aforesaid [the reformed Orders of the twelfth century] are in these days so relaxed, and grown so cold, that we may truly say of them in the words of Jeremiah: *How is the gold become dim!* . . . All the aforesaid Orders . . . have been brought to naught even in the matter of the fundamentals—the three Substantial Vows" [of Poverty, Obedience, and Chastity]; the Black Monks [Benedictines and Cluniacs] are black not only in frock but in mind. Yet there have been a few encouraging reforms, especially that of St Justina at Padua and the Enclosed Ladies at Florence. On the other hand, even so recent a reform as the Sylvestrine "is now come almost utterly to naught," and all but a few nuns walk in the broad and easy way. Meffret, a German preacher who wrote in 1443, says that "many Religious are fallen from the heaven of Scripture-study; wherefore we must fear that they sweat in lechery." St Bernardino's friend, the abbot of Monte Oliveto [1451], had "heard for certain from ancient and experienced fathers, that it is rare for a Religious Order to remain in good observance beyond a century." Thomas Gascoigne, the famous chancellor of Oxford University, wrote about 1450. He speaks bitterly and repeatedly of the harm done by appropriation of parish revenues to monasteries, whereby "it cometh oftentimes to pass that many more persons in these parishes go to hell than those who are fed in the monasteries through such appropriations." The monks often spend this money upon "gluttonous dishes and vicious irregularities"; God's last words to such will be: "Depart from me, ye accursed"; the pope has already disendowed a few of the worst; it would be well if this process could be very greatly extended. About the same time, or a little later, we have a German witness in Jakob von Jüterbogk, first a Cistercian

abbot and finally a Carthusian prior. There are many wolves in sheep's clothing among Religious; while their evil example scandalizes some among the laity, it encourages others to sin. "Many enter into Religion not for God's sake but for their own bodily comfort"; faults are not corrected; is not "that incurable sickness" now come upon the world which forebodes the coming of Antichrist? "The clerical dignity and the estate of religion are held of no account among secular folk; spiritual failure has brought financial embarrassment; thus, a convent that once had seventy brethren will now have eight or ten. The civil authorities ought now to step in and compel reform; a remarkable sentence, agreeing with Gascoigne's contemporary plea, and with that in *Piers Plowman* of two generations earlier. Orthodox churchmen are driven to think of this desperate remedy because, as Jakob tells us, Religious now plead that long custom has made relaxation a matter of course: "When I made my profession, I did not profess the strict Rule of Benedict or Francis." These words receive remarkable corroboration from a letter penned in 1450, perhaps at the very moment when Jakob was writing. The abbot of the Scottish monastery at Vienna, struggling for reform, wrote for advice from a friend at the reformed house of Melk. At his consecration, he had sworn to keep the Rule and to cause his brethren to keep it: therefore "what abbot can come to salvation? since many things are contained in the Rule which are kept neither by superiors nor by their subjects." Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, writing at the same time, complains that "in many Religious, nothing but the outward habit is left"; secular princes ought to step in and punish unchaste cloisterers. His contemporary Hemmerlin, precentor of Zürich, writes: "The effect of prohibition is that. . . among all Religious, lechery is the more ardent"; money spent on endowing monasteries would be better spent elsewhere; the father who thinks he has given his daughter as a bride to God has often given her to the world and the Devil. A contemporary canon of St-Victor at Paris asserts that "the fervour of every Order is relaxed; the Black Monks are going to ruin, the White are changed." In 1452, the legatine visitors for the province of Salzburg complained that "monastic Religion is fallen" in those parts, many of the Religious are belly-

gods. Another contemporary, Dionysius the Carthusian, was one of the most honoured ecclesiastics of the time [1450]. He recurs over and over again to the corruption of the clergy in general, and Religious in particular. "In the monasteries, the solemn vows are assiduously and most wickedly broken; the cloisters of nuns are open to harlots." "The buildings dedicated to God are turned into brothels, unless they be kept under diligent custody"; the children thus begotten walk about the earth. "Simple folk are unspeakably scandalized." The large majority of nuns violate the rule of enclosure; but there are "many yet of truly devout nuns, especially the *Regularissae*<sup>1</sup> in these parts, and certain Clarisses"; the Carthusian nuns also are strictly claustrated. Other houses show examples of "foul carnality and scandalous life"; some monks rob their churches to maintain "their harlots and their children": we have to bewail "destruction and ruin and perversity in monasteries and collegiate bodies within every tribe and tongue and nation of Christendom." The bad nowadays are to the good, when we compare them with earlier and purer days, as ten to one. In Thomas a Kempis (d. 1471) we should expect to find the brightest side of monastic life, and in fact he constantly dwells upon the sweetness of true Religion, "if it be rightly kept"; but he says little to indicate how far it is rightly kept in fact. He shames the lukewarm by reminding them of "so many other Religious, who are strictly bound under claustral discipline... [e.g.] Carthusians, Cistercians, and monks and nuns of divers Orders." But he contrasts earlier monasticism with "the coldness and negligence of our state"; "nowadays that man is thought a great [Religious] who is not a transgressor." Many try to live comfortably in the cloister; few really keep their fervour to the end. About the same time [1470], we have the evidence of Rodrigo, bishop of Zamora in Spain. His *Mirror of Human Life* reviews all classes of society, rehearsing alternately what can be said for and against them. Of the monastic state in itself he speaks with high praise; again, at the very end, he reminds us that whatever evil he may have reported, "the reproof fastens not upon Religion but upon those who defile Religion." Yet

<sup>1</sup> A new and small Order of reformed nuns in western Germany.

these are many: "Few of them are holy"; "many are Religious in name, few in deed"; apostasy is frequent; "the stones of the sanctuary are scattered"; the vows of Poverty, Obedience and Chastity are broken; "very many Religious" lead an unedifying life which he describes in detail, ending with: "The Minister-General generates [children]." He sums up as a thoughtful Quaker might today: piety, humility, purity, are possible everywhere, but "these things may be more easily practised in monasteries, if there be bodily strength and power of mind to support them." There, however, is the rub; and a postulant should weigh his own chances very scrupulously before taking the vows; "for it is certain that more fail than those who advance"; and bad monks are as much worse than laymen as good monks are better. Next comes the Carthusian, Werner Rolewinck [1488]. Writing about Westphalia with very exaggerated praise, though the exaggeration is natural enough in a Westphalian, he comes to the subject of Church life in that province. He describes in picturesque detail the work of the many zealous pastors there and commends their readiness "to reform and bring back to prosperity the [monastic] Rules that are now fallen, and their reputation that is now departing together with their possessions."

Our next two witnesses are, in some ways, the most important of all. The first of these was not only learned and pious, and zealous for reform, and the friend of ecclesiastical and lay princes, but he was a real historical scholar, familiar with archives which have long since perished, and of which we should know little but for his patient transcriptions or abstracts. Johann Tritheim (Trithemius, 1462-1516) became abbot at Spanheim and at Würzburg. His *Exhortations to Monks* were composed about 1490, and in other works he deals almost equally fully with monachism. While these were being written, the generation was born which was destined to bring about the Reformation in England; and it is astounding that a writer like Janssen, who is professedly concerned with discovering the condition of German monasticism at this period, and who so frequently quotes Tritheim for other purposes, should ignore a series of judgments which are scattered over almost every portion of the author's works, and which are among the few most important

documents in the ecclesiastical history of that age<sup>1</sup>. Though real sinners form, naturally, a numerical minority, yet they are "many" in the sense that monasticism has lost general respect, and the whole system cries for reform. Lay folk have ceased to build or to endow; they say: "Lo! these sinful priests and monks have gotten riches; lo! they scorn the service of God and consume their wealth with harlots." Out of the 10,000 Benedictine houses, "scarce one thousand, as we believe, have been kept to any sort of Regular observance." "Shame withholds me from treating of the other plague-spots of certain abbots"; yes, even in the reformed congregations. "Among our own [Reformed] congregation of Bursfeld there are (God amend it!) many abbots and monks coarser than peasants, more cruel than beasts, who are neither bent by mildness, nor ever persuaded by even the holiest exhortations, to keep God's commands or those of the Rule." As to other abbots, "ye spend your days in covetousness and lust." "Ye may perchance find devout monks even now, though few; but these are simple folk and unlearned." Many others "spurn the vow of poverty, ignore that of chastity, and make light of obedience. . . . Vice and crime have free play; virtue is not admitted. . . . they despise both heaven and hell." Apostasy is common; "never was [Benedictine] Religion beset with such grievous evils." And these have become chronic: "For about two hundred years past, the purity of monastic institutions has failed"; there has never been any general reformation, and partial reforms have failed. The reformed Benedictines of Germany "have in your chapter 127 abbeys, whereof, in the three aforesaid Congregations, scarce 70 have remained under reform"; therefore even here there are "things well-known, which I am ashamed to pronounce, and you, most reverend fathers, would shudder to hear." Again, enumerating the nine main attempts at monastic reform in Germany, from Charles the Great to his own day, Trithem adds: "All have decayed from their first institution, and have been either wholly or to a great extent obliterated." Let no man flatter himself with "these buildings, curious and super-

<sup>1</sup> Compare in his *Deutsche Geschichte, u.s.w.*, the last section of vol. I (17th ed. p. 722), where he actually complains of the insufficiency of the material for a final judgement on the result of attempted reforms in Germany at that time.

fluous," which are often a vain expense. Even in the quite recent reform of Bursfeld, "we fear now to fall. . . we fear [that even our model monasteries] will fall within a few years"; for we see the miserable decay, "spiritual and material," of houses "which we know to have been well reformed within a few years past."

For the next, I anticipate a few years in time, because he has almost the same right to generalize as Trithem, and even his different point of view is valuable, stressing the difficulties of reform in France as Trithem stresses German conditions. Gui Jouenneaux, papal commissary for the reform of the French Benedictines, described in 1503 the abuses which he was specially deputed to amend<sup>1</sup>. "Among those whose profession and habit would seem to proclaim them monks, many, I grieve to say, have nothing in common [with real monasticism]... This sort of undisciplined monks is more worldly than the mere worldling" (p. 6). They gamble, even against civil law, "not without frequent blasphemy and execrable curses"; they hunt, and haunt taverns, and bear swords: "were I minded to rehearse all these things which have come under my own eyes, I should make too long a tale of it" (p. 7). Punishment is inadequate: "the name of *Monk*, once so glorious, is turned to disgrace and to derision" (p. 8). "They live the life of Bacchanals," and heap up riches like worldlings (p. 9), embezzling Church goods (p. 10). "Hospitality. . . is become so utterly strange and foreign to our monasteries, that its very name hath perished in oblivion. Such hospitality [as St Benedict's], with her sister almsgiving, hath bidden a long farewell to our convents (p. 10). The little priories of two or three persons are what St Bernard called them, "synagogues of Satan"; "whom but idolaters do we see ministering [there], whose god is their belly?" (p. 11). They not only do no manual work, but quibble the obligation away (p. 12). Their sloth leads them naturally into wandering and incontinence (p. 13). Moreover, worse still, these relaxations are defended in "pernicious writings" by the adversaries of reform (pp. 14 ff.). Especially in the matter of flesh-eating, in which the Rule is scarcely ever kept (pp. 18 ff.). Such violations

<sup>1</sup> The page references here are to my *Medieval Studies*, no. XI; see Appendix 36.

sow the seeds of lust (p. 19). Monks go outside and feast with their gossips (p. 22). Reading in refectory is now neglected (p. 23). They claim to be exempt from any visitation, in virtue of certain papal privileges (pp. 24 ff.). Jouenneaux recurs again, with greater detail, to familiarities with women, private property and irreverence:

in some monasteries, words of contumely fall thick among the psalmody, and are bandied hither and thither from mouth to mouth . . . so that the choir of psalm-singers might rather be taken for a tavern full of drunken folk. . . . The monks, still burdened with the flesh which they devoured at supper, and drenched with drink, sigh not with devotion but from the gorge (p. 26)<sup>1</sup>.

Then comes a chapter headed: "Of the extraordinary banquetings of monks, and of their belly-worship." These things (he adds) cannot but call for divine vengeance (p. 27). The services might be shortened; but those prescribed should be actually performed: "In many monasteries, and especially at the night-services, there is but one priest present, with a young boy; moreover, I have heard that one single priest has sometimes performed the night-services and taken the part of both sides of the choir, while the others, it may be guessed, are buried in wine and sleep" (p. 28).

If Jouenneaux and his friends, even with a good deal of help from the civil authorities, performed so small a part of their whole task, and if even this partial reform rapidly cooled down, the cause may be found in what has been often preached both before and since his time; it is of little use to rebuild here and there, so long as the foundation is rotten. In 1494, Alexander VI's bull for the reformation of Benedictine houses gives a very dark picture of the Order in general, and of the nunneries in particular<sup>2</sup>. But, at this same time, as the contemporary diarist Burchard assures us, Alexander was continuing his predecessor's custom of giving his own daughters openly in marriage and, with this and similar examples before them, "almost all the monasteries in Rome have already become brothels."

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Chaucer, *Summoner's Tale*, l. 225:

"Whan they for soulës seye the Psalm of Davit  
Lo! buf! they seye, *cor meum eructavit*."

<sup>2</sup> J. du Breul, *Aimoin*, etc. 1603, p. 901. It is too verbose to print in Appendix 36.

That terrible word, or some equally brutal equivalent, has already met us here and there, in Gerson, in the pseudo-Clémanges and in Nider; it will be repeated by at least five other remarkable witnesses as we draw nearer to the Reformation<sup>1</sup>. Those who care to follow this subject in Appendix 36 will see that pious churchmen's complaints grow bitterer and bitterer, but I need no longer note them with the same detail in this chapter. The writers are Jean Standonck, one of the most distinguished professors at Paris; the abbot of Mellifont, head of the Irish Cistercians; an anonymous Carthusian; Innocent VIII; Jean Raulin, professor at Paris and Cluniac monk; the Dominican Savonarola\*; a correspondent of the bishop of Padua; the abbots-general of Marmoutier and Cîteaux; Johann Geiler\*, the cathedral preacher of Strassburg; the Leipzig professor and preacher, Georg Morgenstern; the Franciscan minister-provincial, Olivier Maillard, the friend of a pope and three kings; Alexander Barclay, D.D. and monk of Ely, the translator of Brandt's *Ship of Fools*; Pico della Mirandola\*, scholar and friend of Lorenzo de' Medici; Michel Menot, another Franciscan preacher at Paris; the English Augustinian General Chapter of 1518; the Council of Paris in 1521; the princes of the German Empire in 1524; Guillaume Pépin\*, the Dominican of Évreux who attacked Luther far more fiercely than his fellow-Religious; Cornelius Agrippa, the scientist whom some accused of Lutheranism but who protested his orthodoxy; Erasmus of Rotterdam\*; Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester and founder of Corpus Christi College at Oxford; the London lawyer, Christopher St Germain; and Hermann von Wied, archbishop of Cologne. Hermann's articles of reform were passed, in full provincial council, in 1536, the year of the Dissolution in England; therefore they fitly close the list for this chapter.

And these later witnesses agree with the earlier, except in so far as they grow more impatient and more emphatic, and hint more plainly that the swelling flood of abuses must some day burst its banks. They stigmatize wealth and ease as the cause of decay; boys and girls are thrust in for financial reasons, "like puppies for the drowning"; grown-up folk take the vows to improve their financial position; this is specially true of Bene-

<sup>1</sup> In the following-list, I have marked these with an asterisk.



dictinism, the greatest and wealthiest Order. Hence a general relaxation of discipline; and here it is the newer reformed Orders which suffer from their exemption from episcopal correction: "in many of the exempt Religious, [this] is nothing else than an unbridled licence to sin." The numbers are kept down in order that a few may live in comfort, or even in riot, where of old many lived in self-denial. "Women enter everywhere"<sup>1</sup>. Almsgiving and hospitality are neglected; church services are ruined by the absence of many and the irreverence of the rest. Little help comes from pope or king, however earnestly men appeal for their aid; in fact, they sometimes find their own profit in the worst abuses. Thus, relaxation becomes consecrated by custom; sinners can say to the reformer: "Why these innovations? We do just as our fellows do"; in short, they correspond to the Pharisees of old (so says Pépin, as we have already heard Alvarus Pelagius saying), and persecute those of their fellows who strive to walk in the straight path. The result is natural: in France, Religious "keep not their Rule, and lead a dissolute and abominable life." "The Devil hath [his own] great abbey . . . where of old there lived Religious, now there dwell serpents and monsters"; moral degeneracy is accompanied by financial bankruptcy. In Germany, the Mendicants prey upon the poor with their importunate and systematic begging; bishops and their officials are bribed to suffer Religious in their incontinence; "the greater number" of monks degrade their profession by haunting taverns and dances; by bearing arms, and sometimes by fatal quarrels. "If thou wilt keep thine house clean, beware of monks and priests." In Italy, "nothing [of the Rule] is kept"; if only there were fewer monks, things might be better. "Almost all Religious" are intent upon personal gain; "the ceremonies and the outward shells have remained; but the inward things, the inward charity and humility are all decayed"; "they have defiled God's tabernacle with uncleanness and filth and lechery," and all this is worst of all in the city of Rome. In England, the pope has reason to believe that the Cluniacs, Cistercians and Premonstratensians "are leading a wanton and most dissolute life"; the Austin canons bewail "the lamentable ruin of the whole Order." Gluttony

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 37.

and drunkenness are too common, and bring unchastity in their train; the virtuous are persecuted by the vicious. The bishop of Winchester feels it impossible to reform the monks even of his single diocese; and St Germain finds the worst obstacle in the timidity or unwillingness of the good minority to contend with the relaxed majority. In Ireland, if this papal policy is continued, of fleecing the monasteries and neglecting proper disciplinary measures, then "that little glimmer of religion which remains in this country will probably be quenched." All through Europe there are still good Religious, of course; indeed, there are "many" good Religious; yet these are not enough to redeem the whole institution; among thoughtful and earnest people there is a general feeling of shame and impatience—even, at times, of horror and almost of revolt. "The Church of today," says Savonarola, "is a harlot." And even the stress of opposition to the Reformation scarcely weakens this feeling among orthodox disciplinarians; I have added evidence for this in my Appendix. Men wrote in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as they had written for centuries before the religious revolution.

Anyone who takes the trouble to read the full extracts, as given in Appendix 36, will see that they cannot be explained by inter-monastic jealousies. The friar does not confine his accusations to the older Orders, nor the Benedictine to the friars. All alike deplore the decay of Religious in general; that is, of monks and friars and nuns. In so far as the arraignment is specialized, it is sometimes against the preacher's own Order. Savonarola seems to turn mainly towards the friars, and certainly Gui Jouenneaux speaks more plainly about his fellow-Benedictines, and in greater detail, than does any Mendicant. It would be difficult to find any subject on which the testimony is so unanimous, all through the greatest differences of place and time and circumstance.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE PROFESSED APOLOGISTS

HITHERTO, we have not dealt with the conscious apologist. Writers like Bishops Otto of Freisingen and Rodrigo of Zamora and Thomas a Kempis have been concerned to extol the institution itself, as every orthodox writer extolled it in the Middle Ages, believing it to be of apostolic origin. Even in these writers, however, it is difficult to find a definitely favourable balance; their words do indeed forbid any indiscriminate condemnation of monasticism, but do not really contradict the many other authors who insist that the institution is sadly decadent in their own day. All these men were orthodox; many of them, from Bernard and Peter the Venerable down to Gower and Gascoigne and Pépin, were far more concerned to hold heretics up to scorn and detestation than they were to criticize the monks. They were orthodox, writing for the orthodox; and this may to some extent explain their vehemence, or even their exaggerations, of language. They were not washing the Church's dirty linen altogether in public; almost all wrote in Latin. It is remarkable that Gower, who speaks so bitterly in Latin and in French—that is, for the learned and upper classes—has little or nothing to say on this subject in his long English poem. Sir Thomas More, again, pleads in so many words that, whereas it was well for Gerson to say what he thought about the clergy in Latin, yet it is wrong for Christopher St Germain to quote this in English, for the understanding of the vulgar. Therefore we have some real reason to look cautiously at the evidence of the two preceding chapters; if we could recall all these authors to life, they might well say; "I wrote those words for Catholic readers who were not likely to misunderstand them; I might have chosen different language for your public of the twentieth century."

But against this we must set the fact, which I have already noted, that monastic panegyrists of the Middle Ages, when they do not actually criticize the practice of their own contemporary

Religious, are significantly silent on the subject. Little help is to be got even from Petrarch's *De Otio Religioso*, in spite of its attractive title. This book, addressed to the Carthusians in whose convent he had stayed, does indeed imply real regularity of life in that monastery, but tells us nothing about contemporary monasticism in general; it is scarcely more than the usual medieval panegyric on the ideal of Religious life as such. Again, the humanist Jakob Wimpheling (1450-1528) is sometimes quoted as a witness for the piety and efficiency of the clergy, including the Regulars<sup>1</sup>. In fact, he confines his testimonial strictly to the secular clergy, and to the six Rhenish dioceses which he knows best; that is, to one of the most civilized districts in Europe. Even here, he only says that he knows "many—nay, numberless"—good priests in those six dioceses, an estimate which few would feel inclined to question; while, in another place, Wimpheling writes of the clergy in far less flattering terms<sup>2</sup>.

But neither Petrarch nor Wimpheling are dealing *ex professo* with the question which chiefly concerns us here; for that, we must turn to other orthodox churchmen who wrote expressly for heretics, or at least with heretical readers in view, and with the intention of demolishing them. Many of these apologists wrote on the Continent; but we may here confine ourselves to England, where monastic life was, on the whole, decidedly more regular than the overseas average. Here we have three learned, able and voluminous apologists, replying directly to the attacks of heretics; Thomas Netter of Walden, Bishop Reginald Pecock and Sir Thomas More. The main heretical attack, so far as it was personal, was upon monks and friars and nuns; what, then, were these three truth-loving apologists able to plead with truth in favour of the Religious of their day?

The institution in itself, of course, they unhesitatingly defend. Whether More, or even Pecock, believed its origin to be actually

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* by Janssen, vol. I, last section (17th ed. 1897, p. 681), which professedly summarizes all we know of the state of Germany on the verge of the Reformation. Even here, Janssen, while professing to translate from Wimpheling, paraphrases his last four or five lines in one single line, and thus suppresses the contrast which Wimpheling implies between these good men and their less reputable fellow-priests.

<sup>2</sup> Riegger, *Amoen.* vol. II, pp. 379 ff.; for Janssen's quotation, see *ibid.* pp. 279 ff.

and literally apostolic, there can be no doubt that Walden did; and all three were concerned to defend it as an integral factor in the machinery of that Church for which any one of the three, like almost every one of our earlier witnesses, would have given his life. Here, therefore, what concerns us is their attitude not towards the institution, but towards the men. Monasticism, like the Church itself, was of God; but how was the actual monk of the fifteenth or earlier sixteenth century working this divine machinery? On this point, the silence, and the implicit confessions, of these laborious apologists are almost more significant than the explicit words of condemnation which we have noted from the lips of their equally orthodox brethren<sup>1</sup>.

One of the most learned of these apologists, and by far the most voluminous, is Thomas Netter of Walden (Thomas Waldensis), the Carmelite friar who was confessor to Henry V and Henry VI. His three anti-Lollard books, *Doctrinale*, *De Sacramentis* and *De Sacramentalibus*, run to three folio volumes; concerning the whole body of his work James Gairdner wrote truly: "As a mere monument of literary industry, it is indeed amazing"<sup>2</sup>. I may claim to have looked through these books, if not word for word, at least with sufficient care to render it improbable that any important passage dealing with the monks has escaped notice. Plodding through page after page, I was amazed to find this methodical and laborious writer practically ignoring all the most serious of the Lollard accusations. He quotes, indeed, the platitude from St Augustine: "Some monks are bad, and we ourselves know some such; yet the pious brotherhood perisheth not by reason of these men who profess to be what they are not"<sup>3</sup>. Again, he devotes a whole chapter to the recitation of what the Fathers have said in praise of monachism. He complains vaguely of exaggeration and ignorance on Wyclif's part, but without ever attempting to come to close quarters. He tries at great length to justify (what he is obliged to confess) the fact that the Religious of the fifteenth century had practically

<sup>1</sup> Fuller quotations from these apologists will be found in Appendix 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Lollardy and the Reformation*, vol. I, p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> My quotations are from *Doctrinale*, lib. II, art. ii, c. 13 (cf. *De Sacramentalibus*, tit. IX, c. 86 *ad fin.*); *ibid.* c. 14; *ibid.* art. iii, c. 69 (cf. *De Sacramentalibus*, tit. IX, cc. 76, 88); *ibid.* lib. IV, art. ii, cc. 22, 26; *De Sacramentalibus*, tit. IX, cc. 76, 78 (cf. 90), 83, 84.

abandoned all pretence of manual labour: "Who art thou" (he retorts upon his Lollard adversary) "that thou shouldst judge another man's servant?" He quotes his adversary's assertion that "many priors and abbots are notorious devils," and can find no better reply than a *tu quoque*: "Dare you swear that none of your Poor Preachers is a fool, or unlearned, or a notorious devil?" At last he waxes warm: "The man is plainly either a liar, or as blind as a bat." Is this because Wyclif has brought some false accusation against the monks? No, it is simply that he neglects St Austin's command of obedience to superiors. Presently we come upon "his blasphemies and his slanders"; but only to find, in the next sentence, that these consist in Wyclif's denial that Christ Himself founded monachism, and in his assertion that the institution was a mere human invention. Then, again, Netter exclaims: "What a solemn lie, echoing down the centuries!" This "solemn lie" turns out to be Wyclif's assertion that St Jerome preferred not to live in a monastic Order. Again: "The impious Wyclif saith in his madness"—what? Simply that Elijah was *not* the original founder of the Friars Carmelite, and that the Virgin Mary and the Apostles did *not* lodge, during the interval between the Crucifixion and Pentecost, hard by the Carmelite Friars' hostel at Jerusalem, "as John writeth in his *Book of the Particular Deeds of the Carmelites*, addressed to the monk Caprasius." The vehemence with which this good friar accuses Wyclif of lying, whenever he thinks he has found a real chance, speaks volumes for his complete silence in the face of many plain moral accusations, and of his perfunctory defence against many others.

Still more significant, if possible, is the line taken by Bishop Pecock. His strongest defence of monachism against the Wycliffites amounts in effect to no more than this, that the monks were indeed open to criticism, but that, as lay folk, they would have lived even more irregularly in the world than they were now living in the cloister<sup>1</sup>. Finally, if we turn to the voluminous controversial writings of Sir Thomas More, we find nothing approaching to the whole-hearted defence of medieval monachism which has been attempted by modern authors. In these English writings, we have no longer the More

<sup>1</sup> *Repressor*, R.S. p. 537.

of Utopia, in whose ideal state the celibate ascetic is counted "holier," but "wiser" the married man who eats meat and abstains from no pleasure that does not hinder his good work in the world. We have now the Lord Chancellor, bound *ex officio* to assist in the burning of heretics, exasperated by the fierce attacks of Tyndale, Fish and Barnes, and concentrating all his energies in defence of the Church against even the measured strictures of the lawyer St-Germain, who claims to speak for the man in the street. Yet, even in these straits, More ventures to say no more than the semi-Lutheran Cornelius Agrippa had said; that there are many good Religious; that we must not generalize hastily from the bad to the good; but that it is better to keep silence on the subject. Here, again, if it had really been possible, without manifest absurdity, to plead in 1530 such arguments as have often been pleaded in modern times, then this greatest English lawyer of the early sixteenth century deserved very ill of his clients.

This being so, it must surprise us less to find so remarkable an accord, so monotonous an accord, among the witnesses who, writing for their own brethren among the Catholic clergy, are free to say exactly what they think and may even exaggerate in the heat of their indignation without serious risk of being misunderstood. Let me repeat that not only heretics are excluded from these chapters (xxvi and xxvii<sup>1</sup>), but professional satirists also, like Nigel Wireker and Walter Map, however orthodox they may have been.

Moreover, this catena of evidence will be far less unfamiliar to foreign than to British scholars. While we, in these islands, have advanced very little beyond the antiquaries of the seventeenth century, who were somewhat warped by a laudable and generous sentimentality, and still more, perhaps, by party antagonism to the Puritans of their own day, Continental scholars have generally faced the actual documents more boldly, and a few of them have advanced far beyond us<sup>2</sup>. With the

<sup>1</sup> One or two were indeed accused of heresy on certain points (*e.g.* Tauler and Savonarola); but there is no more reason to doubt their fundamental orthodoxy than Joan of Arc's.

<sup>2</sup> Janssen and Pastor, for instance, show themselves aware of things which are ignored by English writers of their party; they champion Ultramontaniam with no less fervour, but with far more learning. For the general standpoint of enlightened Catholicism in Germany, see the introduction to Appendix 34.

exception of F. W. Maitland, who left this particular subject alone, we have had no medievalist who could be put above Achille Luchaire and P. Imbart de la Tour in France, or Albert Hauck in Germany. The agnostic Luchaire studied the period about 1200 A.D. exhaustively, and his picture of monasticism is perhaps darker than mine. The protestant Hauck, though his great Church history does not come down to the days of most evident decay, speaks very plainly here and there; and Imbart is in some ways the least favourable of the three. He writes as an exponent of enlightened Catholicism, but he knew far too much, and was far too honest, to conceal from himself or from his readers that, on the eve of Luther's appearance, monastic reform seemed to present an almost insoluble problem<sup>1</sup>. Whereas the British public has been assured, for the last forty years, that "the evil repute of monks and friars dates from [the later seventeenth century],"<sup>2</sup> yet orthodox Catholics in France are able to face the fact that "medieval literature, whether rightly or wrongly, does censure monastic morals in crude terms and without distinction"<sup>3</sup>. Let us, in this century of ours, make all legitimate distinctions, but let us not turn our eyes away from the underlying facts.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 39, in which I have also incorporated part of Professor Mode's judgement on the state of the English monasteries in the later fourteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Gasquet, *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*, 3rd ed. vol. II, p. 492.

<sup>3</sup> G. Mollat, *Les papes d'Avignon*, 1912, p. 234. "La littérature du moyen âge, à tort ou à raison, censure crûment et sans distinction les mœurs monastiques."



## CHAPTER XXIX

### RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

HAVING travelled thus far, let us pause to take our bearings. We have traced the evolution of this monastic institution from a primitive communism to capitalism; again, even the mendicant reaction towards communism has but partially succeeded. The Orders are gradually subjected to more searching criticism from an increasingly prosperous and intelligent public, whose verdict is almost uniformly unfavourable. When all reasonable deductions have been made from this mass of testimonies, there remains a very solid substratum which is proof against legitimate historical criticism. Where so many authors, otherwise trustworthy, concur in painting a certain picture of a certain institution, as it operates in their own day and under their own eyes, then we have no more right to question the substantial accuracy of that picture than to doubt, on the other side, the sincerity of medieval religious utterances. We must not play fast and loose. If we may not believe even one-quarter of what St Bernard and St Bonaventura tell us on this particular subject, why should we trust these same men when they strike that other note of personal piety and yearning for Heaven? If we are dealing with witnesses whose most emphatic words are untrustworthy concerning their brother whom they have seen, why should we believe in their devotion to the God whom they have not seen? Though we must certainly discount the zeal of reforming enthusiasts, and the malice of satirists, and the unimaginative dulness of ordinary men face to face with a professedly idealist community, yet it is on principle that we must discount them, and not in mere caprice. To believe only where we choose to believe, while averting agnostic eyes from all that grates upon us, is to earn St Bernard's curse upon the half-hearted: "Such men labour with Christ, but with Christ they shall not reign."

How then, while admitting all that is certain in these facts, can we guard against unfair exaggeration? Two things are here

essential. The modern author himself must do all he can to see both sides; and, again, he must trust his public. With all his efforts, he will not arrive at complete personal impartiality; he may even fail here in proportion to his complacent feeling of success. But the public will supply what is lacking in the book; for a multitude of partialities go far to cancel each other out; and the totality of readers will decide more truly, in the long run, than the most carefully-balanced author. But, for the public to judge, they must have the facts put fully and frankly before them. And nothing is more likely to keep the author straight than that he should constantly bear in mind the mixed character of any educated and thoughtful audience. He is debtor, like St Paul, both to the Greek and to the barbarian in this struggle to throw most light upon the religion of the past.

For this is, in some very real senses, a bygone religion; only amid the backwaters of the modern world can it still be found without essential change. In Great Britain and America, especially, the moderate Roman Catholic is divided from his ancestor of the thirteenth century by a deeper gulf than from the moderate Anglican or Wesleyan of today, whether we regard his faith or his practice. In faith, he is now bound to believe in the Immaculate Conception, which the most learned and orthodox of his ancestors repudiated. Again, the doctrine of Infallibility, as defined in 1870, is almost equally difficult to reconcile with the medieval creed. And, thirdly, the modern Roman scheme of heaven and hell differs so much from that of even refined theologians of seven centuries ago, as to dwarf many of the differences most vehemently contested between Roman Catholics and non-Catholics.

Nor are the changes in practice less significant. What modern priest, in English-speaking countries, would dare to go out with his flock and sprinkle holy-water against the approaching hail-storm, or solemnly to excommunicate a plague of caterpillars with bell, book and candle? What prior of a modern monastery would teach the parish clergy to teach their parishioners, as from St Augustine, that he who has heard Mass, shall never, within twenty-four hours, lack food or eyesight, or die by sudden death? What pope, in the face of modern society, would dare publicly to burn nonconformists for purely religious

differences? Or, if a villager drove his pitchfork through some old woman whom he imagined to have bewitched him, would even an Irish jury give a deliberate verdict that he had done this "in lawful self-defence, as against the devil"? No picture of mediæval religion can be true which ignores these things, and more things of the same kind than need here be rehearsed. For one reader who would wish them discreetly omitted, there are far more who desire to learn the whole facts and to judge for themselves. Even more than St Paul, therefore, we are debtors now to all sorts and conditions of men, since this is an age of fuller intercourse and wider world-sympathies, in which no man has a right to ignore any neighbour who, in any way, is sincerely facing the great problem, and is trying in this world of sense to grope for a world unseen. We are debtors to the sincere Catholic and to the sincere agnostic: our testimonies should go some way at least, to explain how the one can believe in Transubstantiation while the other disbelieves in God. When Newman singled out Gibbon as the greatest, and perhaps the only English ecclesiastical historian, this was not because he agreed with Gibbon's conclusions, but because he recognized the laborious care with which Gibbon had chosen and marshalled a series of representative facts. The famous 15th and 16th chapters of the *Decline and Fall* are far removed from absolute impartiality. They do not even profess to get to the bottom of the subject; Gibbon warns us that he is enquiring "not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian Church." Yet, within these limits, he duly rehearses the salient points. His bias on one side may be almost as obvious as a bishop's bias on the other, but he hides less away than the clergy of his age would have hidden; and, at its very worst, this cross-bias of the irresponsible historian did expose many sins of omission on the part of the authorities fashionable in his own day. Even where we least agree with him, we can see how he has stirred the stagnant waters; and our very repudiation of this man's inferences may quicken our apprehension of the ultimate truth. It is of the essence of true faith that it can face the cruellest of facts; not overlooking them, but looking also beyond them, to "see the Canaan that we love with unbeckoned eyes." Therefore, by

whatever other name we may call it, whatever excuse or palliation we may seek for it, the avoidance of unpleasant facts is unfaith; and, still worse, the denial or distortion of unpleasant facts. The mainspring of medieval religious intolerance was not faith in the Pauline sense, but a belief often mingled with misgivings, behind an imposing façade of absolute conviction.

Here, therefore, while we face the evidence of imperfections even in the heyday of monasticism, and of decay during the thirteenth and succeeding centuries, let us not forget that these imperfections are exaggerated by contrast with a very lofty standard, and that this decay never brought the average monk so low as the average of non-monastic medieval humanity. The Rule was seldom altogether obliterated; or, where it was, the unruly community seldom lasted long. These centuries are strewn with the wreckage of bankrupt convents, and, before the Reformation, the monastic population had diminished by something like twenty-five per cent. Those convents which remained were those which had survived by retaining some sort of order in a comparatively disorderly world. If the Reformation had found them still a community of contented idealists, working and living upon little more than a living wage, and employing their vast constitutional privileges rather to forward than to obstruct the world's progress, then there would have been no excuse for their disestablishment. If the medieval monastic type had even approximated to St Bernard and Thomas a Kempis, there might now be some reason for limiting monastic history to a record of its great personalities. But few men would claim that we shall best understand agnosticism by limiting our vision to men like Henry Sidgwick, who possessed to an exceptional degree every Christian virtue except faith; indeed, it is one merit of the agnostic that he asks for no such preferential treatment in history. Moreover, even if we restricted our monastic studies to the small minority of saints, yet truth would still compel us to display every side of those saints. The Bernard who followed, naked, the naked Christ, was also he who plainly warned popes that Christ's Church was being ruined by the corruption of the Roman court, and by papal interferences which too often resulted in protection for the guilty and discouragement for virtuous reformers. Again, it was he who, as

a theologian, adopted a conservatism so impossible in face of intellectual claims, that Aquinas and all the great orthodox schoolmen sided on this point not with the saint but with his opponent, Abailard. Aquinas, again, with his compeers, was compelled to conclude that the joys of the blessed would be increased by the sight of the damned in hell; and it was he who forged that chain of inexorable logic from the premisses of thirteenth-century orthodoxy to the conclusion of death for all baptized and persistent nonconformists; a chain of which no orthodox theologian dares explicitly and publicly to break a single link even at the present day. These things are of eternal significance in history, and must never be forgotten. Yet, side by side with them, we must bear in mind the ascetic's moral and physical courage, and his steady forward view. Even where he deliberately calculated on a hundredfold future reward for present abnegation, such self-control and such foresight are chief among the characteristics which raise a man above a brute. Again, however mistaken any man may now judge these calculations to have been, the fact remains that he who makes no mistakes will never make anything. The best men of those days were as good as the best of any day; and, to the very end, a considerable proportion of these best men were in the monasteries. But Nider, whose nephews and great-nephews lived to see a Lutheran world, recognized, as clearly as any modern student could infer it, that the good were too few to redeem the mass, and too few in comparison with other good men in the world without. The *Ancien Régime* in France produced some of the greatest figures in all history. Our unreformed Commons of 1830 contained statesmen of whom any age might be proud; but history must take account of the multitude also, and even a cursory acquaintance with that unreformed Parliament will explain many of the contrasts, and even paradoxes, which confront the student of medieval monastic records. Noble and striking figures will be conspicuous here and there in my last volume, but mainly in contrast with the multitude whom they were struggling to regenerate. Meanwhile, in the third volume, it must be my task to sketch different chapters of the monk's daily life. There we shall see people of not very much more than average intelligence or morals or piety, leading a life not

essentially different from the average life of their time; certainly, far less different in fact than in profession and in theory. We shall see them rising definitely higher than their fellow-men on the whole, yet removed from the world by no such clear-cut gulf as their vows had promised. It is comparatively rare to find, in the later Middle Ages, any parallel to St Bernard's burning and ever-present conviction that the monk, with all his risks, trod incomparably the safest way to Heaven. Nothing can better explain this change of attitude than a detailed examination of daily Religious routine during these succeeding centuries, as contrasted with the missionary fervour of the twelfth century. We may then understand how even the most loyal sons of the Church gradually drifted to the conviction that things would have to grow worse before they could be better. It will help us to see why, towards the end of the period with which this volume is chiefly concerned, German-speaking peoples began to look forward to a Second Advent of the anti-clerical emperor, Frederick II, who should put down clerical claims with a high hand, even though he were too rough with his enemies<sup>1</sup>. Again, it will help to explain the view taken of the Religious Orders in *Piers Plowman*, which reflects the ideas of the average thoughtful person in Chaucer's London; of the man who loved the Church, yet who knew that God and Truth are greater than any visible institution, and therefore greater than the organized Church; that God and the Truth are touchstones by which, in every generation, the visible Church must be tried. To Holy Church, as the author confesses, he owes his nurture and his hopes of eternal life<sup>2</sup>; yet Holy Church, in these days of his, stands in desperate peril; her worst foes are the foes within, and of these the most dangerous is the unreformed friar. Monasticism in itself is good; and the average Religious, by his Rule, is kept above the average of humanity. He often gives an excellent example of discipline and plain living. But friars are tempted to flattery, and, as a whole, monks are too rich and too unspiritual; thus, if they continue to worship money as the Templars had worshipped it, they will soon share the Templars'

<sup>1</sup> Hoeniger, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> If it were proved, as it is sometimes surmised, that we are dealing here not with a single author but with a group, the present argument is not affected.

fate; "the tyme approcheth faste." For, unless some real reform grow up within the cloister itself, or unless the pope enforce it, then the laity must some day step in. And, if ever the king and his council take it in hand to "confesse yow Religiouses, And bete yow, as the bible telleth, for brekyng of yowre reule," then be sure that they will smite once and smite no more: "incurable the wounde"<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> B. xv, 509 ff.: x, 317 ff. (cf. v, 48 and x, 266); xx, 227 ff.

## APPENDIXES

### I

(Author's Preface, p. ix)

### CRITICS OF VOL. I

THE Bishop of Gloucester, in his Primary Charge to the clergy of his diocese, warned them against my volume. The author, he said, "in his preface tells us that he has not troubled to illustrate the higher contributions of the Middle Ages to religion, as they have often been described." He is an "advocatus diaboli," who "deliberately produces a one-sided work." A friend drew my attention to these words, and I took the liberty of asking his lordship how he would justify them from my actual book. After four months' delay, and one plain reminder, I received an answer which convinced me that the bishop had not read my book, in the ordinary sense of the word, before passing judgement upon it. He was finally unable to produce any words from my preface which really answered to his description. With regard to the accusation of "advocatus diaboli," it was fortunately reducible to a question of almost mathematical simplicity. I challenged him to name a single Anglican author who, during the last 25 years, has written of St Benedict and St Bernard at greater length, or with more unqualified praise, than they receive in my volume. The bishop here confessed himself unable to confront me with any less devilish advocate than myself; yet he offered no apology for his original statement. Within the last few months, he has found himself in a similar position towards the Roman Catholics, having brought against one cardinal an accusation which he was quite unable to justify, yet for which he offered no apology (*Church Times*, March 12, April 9 and 23, 1926).

Without ignoring that we have here one of the best-read bishops on the present bench, I may perhaps be forgiven for suggesting, in view of these answers to me and to others, that his charge was based less on anything he had actually found for himself in my volume than upon two far more serious reviews to which I must now turn; Professor Tout's in *The Scottish Historical Review* (July 1923) and Professor Powicke's in *History* (January 1924, an article to which I replied, and Professor Powicke added a rejoinder, in the April number). While gladly acknowledging the kindness with which both these critics have treated me personally, I must explain why their condemnation of my results leaves me impenitent, and will be found to have made little mark upon this second volume. The former gives no reasons, and I cannot help feeling that his disagreement is in great part due to a natural unfamiliarity with this particular field of medieval history.



With the latter I feel this even more strongly, since he repudiates some of my results on the explicit plea that they are irreconcilable with other things medieval which we do know with absolute certainty (p. 257). I cannot accept this line of argument; on the contrary, we must try to find out the facts in each separate part of the field; and, if we ourselves cannot reconcile these facts, it is still our duty to state them just as they appear to us, leaving other more successful scholars to co-ordinate where we have failed, even though this reconciliation may never come about until we ourselves are dead. And, apart from this my general repudiation of a general condemnation, I have been strengthened in my original conclusions by the specific cases which my critic alleges in order to convict me of error. In the St-Gall case, I understand him finally to admit that he had not read, or had forgotten, the actual words of the chronicler which we were discussing (pp. 264, 5, 16). His objections in the Cluny case, again, seem to rest upon an equal unfamiliarity with the actual documents (pp. 266, 3, 15). And, finally, he does not always deal with my actual words, as when he claims freedom of speech on both sides: "Only Mr C. should do as he would be done by. There must be no warning of 'well-intentioned ecclesiastics' off the ground" (p. 14). My actual words ran: "It is one of the worst, because subtlest, obstacles to monastic history that so large a proportion of documents have been edited by well-intentioned ecclesiastics who have only a parochial view of monasticism in general, and who seldom get to the bottom of the very text with which they are immediately concerned. Even scholars often read no farther than the commonplace remarks of these introductions, and so miss the real significance of the texts." It is plain that, so far as this pronouncement warns anybody off, it is not on account of his good intentions or his ecclesiastical status, but on account of his parochial limitations and his blindness to significant things in his text. There is no question here of limiting free speech, but of ordinary historical efficiency; or, to put it in other words, of common sense. I cannot think that Professor Powicke is prepared to deny that slipshod editions are dangerous, if such do in fact exist. If, on the other hand, he really doubts that a great deal of the work of which I speak is painfully narrow in outlook and hampered by natural ecclesiastical limitations, then this doubt would go far to explain our final differences.

Four other critics are too important to be neglected. In *The Catholic Historical Review* of America, the Very Rev. P. J. Healy frequently misunderstands what I hoped were plain words, e.g. where, ignoring my own definition of "unsacerdotalism" on p. 18, he fills half a page with quotations to prove my ignorance of things with which I was not really dealing; or when he chooses to misunderstand, on p. 16, a couple of sentences which rest partly on facts acknowledged by all historians, partly on an inference of Harnack's for which Fr Healy himself offers no disproof. But the most remarkable example of this desire "to find or forge a fault" is in his attack on my p. 12, where I have written: "*Gregory II, in 730 A.D., could complacently argue upon*

the supposition that the apostles had worshipped images; conspicuous theologians often claimed an apostolic origin for monachism and for the system of indulgences; but men like Origen and Augustine knew too much of history and philosophy to go so far astray." Fr Healy, taking the liberty of omitting altogether that essential part of my sentence which is here italicized, accuses me of a blunder from which I might have been saved by "a slight knowledge of the history, to say nothing of the sources for the history, of monachism," seeing that "Origen could not have spoken about monachism, an institution which was unknown until approximately 55 years after his death" (p. 249). It is evident that Fr Healy is himself ignorant of Origen's best-known and perhaps greatest book, the *Contra Celsum*, or he would not thus have mutilated my sentence and disguised the fact that I cite Origen as one who knew, what Gregory ignored, the non-apostolic origin of image-worship. Origen, in that book, has to meet the heathen philosopher's accusation of impiety, based on the fact that the Christians of that date (about A.D. 240) had neither temples, nor images of any description. Instead of denying the fact, by which he could have confuted Celsus in two words, he repeatedly explains that Christians repudiate images for definite religious reasons. He looks upon it as one of the Jews' great contributions to pure religion that they expelled from their state "all painters and makers of images... an art which attracts the attention of foolish men, and which drags down the eyes of the soul from God to earth." He bases the Christian dislike of images, *inter alia*, upon this Mosaic prohibition. The real image of God is in the human soul; His real temple is man's body; Christians deride pagans who pray to statues, and who excuse themselves on the plea that they address not a man-made thing but the god or hero represented by that thing; "a Christian, even of the common people, is assured that every place forms part of the universe, and that the whole universe is God's temple. In whatever part of the world he is, he prays; but he rises above the universe, 'shutting the eyes of sense, and raising upward the eyes of the soul.'" This being so, "what reasonable man can refrain from smiling when he sees that one who has learned from philosophy such profound and noble sentiments about God or the gods, turns straightway to images and offers them his prayers, or imagines that by gazing upon these material things he can ascend from the visible symbol to that which is spiritual and immaterial?"<sup>1</sup> It is natural enough that Fr Healy should be ignorant of this most important chapter in ecclesiastical history, even though it is brought out clearly enough by Gibbon, and Origen himself is quoted in such a well-known book as Littledale's *Plain Reasons* (1st ed. pp. 31-2). For this point is consistently slurred over or avoided altogether by Roman Catholic apologists, who form the staple reading of seminarists and upon whom sacerdotal scholarship is

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Celsum*, bk IV, c. 31; bk VI, c. 14; bk VII, cc. 44, 62-7; bk VIII, cc. 17-19. The relevant pages in Crombie's translation (Edinburgh, 1872) are 193, 351, 467, 482-7, 505-6.

necessarily often based. Of such apologists Fr Ryder is a brilliant representative; indeed, it is generally supposed that he wrote his reply to Litledale with Newman's help; yet there he wrests two of Litledale's three quotations from Origen into a sense inconsistent with their actual context, and silently shirks the third, which is too evidently impatient of such apologetic distortion (*Catholic Controversy*, 7th ed. p. 120). Therefore non-Catholic historians must suffer nowadays for the sins of former Catholic apologists; if only Fr Ryder and his companions had been more straightforward, Fr Healy would have known the plain facts, and would never have been tempted to distort my sentence by omitting the very words which showed that I knew them also; he would have seen in this case no blunder about monks, but an obvious allusion to that episode in the Iconoclastic controversy which, unhappily, is most consistently ignored by those whose main professional business it should be to know it. Lastly, I am taken vehemently to task for devoting only "a meagre paragraph" to St Benedict of Aniane's reforms, and saying nothing about certain other matters in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries (p. 253). This, my critic implies, is a treachery to my readers which may be compared with the startling omissions from quoted documents which I have exposed in distinguished modern Benedictines (p. 253). Yet not only are these events obviously outside my period, but the matters which Fr Healy rehearses, if taken in their totality, would have tended rather to darken than to lighten the shadows in my picture. If our knowledge of medieval monasticism were confined to these reforms of Aniane, together with the causes which led to them and with the evidence for their brief-lived results, then there would be not more excuse, but less, for many of the modern exaggerated panegyrics upon Benedictinism. So that, here again, I am accused of ignorant prejudice because the little which I know of this particular episode does still happen to extend a short way beyond that which the system of ecclesiastical censorship has permitted my critic to learn. Therefore, when an adversary who is so determined in disagreement, and who has so much professional right to disagree, bases his condemnation of a book mainly upon questions like this, then the author is naturally encouraged to hope that he has told something like the truth on those more important matters which the critic leaves alone. But Fr Healy certainly knows the sources for third and fourth century monachism better than I do, and I am grateful to him for four corrections in my few introductory pages, which will be found in the corrigenda.

In *Analecta Bollandiana*, my volume was reviewed by Fr P. Grosjean; in the Louvain *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* by Fr J. de Ghellinet, S.J., and in the *Revue bénédictine* by Dom Ursmer Berlière, who is probably the most learned in Benedictine history of all those continental scholars whose attainments far surpass those of their brethren in these islands. Each treated me with great courtesy; each has, naturally, taken frank exception to some of my main conclusions; but none has supplied details which help to swell my list of *errata*. Dom Berlière, while

emphasizing the later decay of monachism almost as strongly as I did, observes that the author "a lu tant d'apologies, tant d'ouvrages incomplets qu'il s'est laissé entraîner à accentuer le côté défavorable"; but, on my request for special instances in which I had been misled by the apologetic or fragmentary character of my documents, he explained that he uttered this only as his general impression. Fr Grosjean was more precise: "pas mal de petits points et de références demandent correction ou vérification... Il y a pourtant, de-ci, de-là, des négligences qui étonnent, et surtout une ignorance trop visible de certaines éditions récentes des textes cités." Since I am pledged to do what I can in the way of corrections of fact, I wrote to ask for a list, however summary, of these little points that call for correction, or of any cases where the older editions have misled me. The letter unfortunately reached Fr Grosjean at a moment when he was obviously too busy to give any such assistance; but when, six months later, I wrote to remind him of my request and what I had understood as an implied promise, on his part, he replied with equal courtesy that his present position, also, rendered it impossible for him to supply either any correction of fact or any instance in which my book would have been changed in any way by a reference to those more recent editions which I am blamed for neglecting.

I am encouraged, therefore, to hope that the list of *corrigenda* herewith supplied for the first volume is, though doubtless far from exhaustive, at least fairly representative. It will be seen, I think, that there is nothing in them which affects my main conclusions to any serious extent. This is one real step forward, however far we may still be from the final goal.

Moreover, even if I have laid a more preponderant emphasis on the darker side than will be formed, I hope, by those whose studies lead them over the same or wider fields among the original records, I might yet plead the precept of so great and so orthodox a writer as Mabillon (*Traité des études monastiques*, ed. 1692, pt II, ch. viii, pp. 315, 324). Insisting on the extreme value of historical studies for his monks, he writes: "To study history is to study men's motives and opinions and passions, in order to learn all their secret springs and turns and windings; all the illusions into which they can betray our mind, and the surprises which they have for our heart. In one word, it is to learn to know ourselves in other men; it is to find matter for edification in saints and virtuous persons and matter of avoidance in the wicked and vicious, and how to behave ourselves in favourable or unfavourable circumstances. Whereas history should serve to teach us morality by wise reflexions, yet, without such dispositions as these, it serves only to give us a vain notion of insipid learning, and to persuade us that we know something, while in fact we know nothing; thus a dangerous effect follows from a good cause... But, however capable we may be in our discernment of completely praiseworthy and virtuous actions, it is still more useful, as our author observes<sup>1</sup>, to dwell mainly on those

<sup>1</sup> He has been quoting from a treatise, *De l'usage de l'Histoire*, Paris, 1671.

which are vicious. This seems paradoxical; but, if we consider it seriously, we shall not be surprised. If everybody had a real love of truth, and were perfectly subject to reason, and if men had a clear recognition of true greatness, then it would need nothing but good examples to lead everybody to good, since the natural beauty of virtue would be sufficient of itself to attract and charm them. But, seeing that such great souls are very few in number, and that the majority of men are full of self-love, ashamed to confess their own faults, and hating the truths which condemn them, therefore good examples are almost useless to them, and they look upon these as a reproach to their own faults. Quintilian remarks this (l. III, c. iii), saying: 'Therefore there is nothing more profitable for them than to show them in history, as in a mirror, the image of their faults. They cannot correct these but by reflecting upon them, and they are not sufficiently disinterested to study them impartially in their own persons, with all the freedom that profit requires; but they have no difficulty in observing and studying them at their leisure in other people, without any shock to their vanity.'"

## 2

(Chapter I, p. 4)

## CHURCHES IN WAR

While adding here some evidence collected at different times, I should direct the reader's special attention to Raymond Rey's admirable monograph: *Les vieilles églises fortifiées du Midi de la France* (Paris, H. Laurens, 1925, 25 fr.).

One of the most interesting historical descriptions may be found in Götz v. Berlichingen's *Lebensbeschreibung* (Reclam's *Universal-Bibliothek*, p. 17). This campaign was in the year 1499. He was serving as a young man under the Markgraf of Brandenburg.

"Shortly afterwards, the captains of the Württemberg and Brandenburg forces made a raid upon Schaffhausen with their troopers and footmen. We came one night to a little village called Thaingen, not far from Schaffhausen. A few of the Switzers had occupied the village church-tower; these held out and refused to surrender, saying that they would rather die as brave Confederates<sup>1</sup>. The lord Melchior Süzell, who held lands between Schaffhausen and Thaingen, was driven away from this tower, and a Switzer smote him in the face with a stone [from a culverin]; many others, nobles and common-folk, were shot by the defenders from this church... Master Jacob the gunsmith, a little dried-up man who stood hard by me, was smitten also; the ball went through his body and struck a Württemberg trooper who had no armour; he was killed, but the gunsmith lived. At last Sebalduß

<sup>1</sup> *Eidgenossen*, the name still used for the Swiss Federation.

Spät and others brought powder and fired it under the tower, so that the defenders were blown up. One Switzer fell from the top with a boy in his arms; the man was killed, but the boy ran away unhurt, and a trooper of our command caught him; what became of him, I know not; I have never seen him since. A few soldiers had tarried too long in the church during this explosion, perhaps in order to steal; they were overtaken by the powder and suffered miserably in the fire, whether they survived a while or not; for they came not out." There is a similar instance from about 1450 in the life of St Nicholas of Flue; the nunnery of Diessenhofen fortified by the Austrians and attacked by the Swiss.

Not only in Switzerland, but in all countries this use of a church tower as a fortress was very common, especially in border-lands; the marches of Wales and Scotland are full of such towers. For Italy, see Caggese, vol. 1, p. 176, and Salvioli, p. 189. In Roussillon, "it was the church which was the central refuge [of the village]: hence that number of fortified churches. . . . In the more important market-towns and cities, it was the belfry which served as a castle-keep for the community. . . . At Coustouagne, James II of Minorca appointed a "castellan of the belfry"—*te de tintinnabulo de Costoja constituimus castellamum*. That purpose of the church towers of Catalonia explains their massive and somewhat heavy form, and their look of a feudal fortress"<sup>1</sup>. In the Rhine valley, even churchyards were sometimes fortified<sup>2</sup>. Brutails (p. 40) gives a list of 94 villages in Roussillon which are known to have been defended by walls, while others moved from the plain to the hills for protection (p. 43: cf. Salimbene, p. 633). Father Denifle's *Désolation des Églises* and S. Luce's *Bertrand du Guesclin* are full of examples of the kind. Monasteries were even more useful than parish churches; military bands often occupied them as a base of operations; cf. the Globe *Froissart*, p. 344, and Ordericus Vitalis in Migne, P.L. vol. 188, col. 627. Here, again, is a petition to the pope: "A.D. 1363. William, Bishop of Sodor. Whereas his cathedral church and precincts have been occupied as a fortress by the lord of the Isle of Man during the wars between England and Scotland, so that the bishops have greatly suffered, and divine service has ceased, he prays the pope to order the said lord to restore the said church to the bishop" (*Calendar of Papal Registers: Petitions*, vol. 1, p. 394). Eweny priory, in Glamorganshire, still exists as an admirable example of a fortified monastery. The priory of Tynemouth was recognized as a valuable fortress<sup>3</sup>. Monasteries in far less dangerous places often obtained royal licence to fortify and embattle; e.g. Spalding<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Brutails, p. 37; cf. the multiplicity of towers in the fertile valleys of the Pyrenees as described by Inglis.

<sup>2</sup> *Zeitschrift f. d. Gesch. d. Oberrheins*, vol. XXVII (1875), pp. 414-15.

<sup>3</sup> Dugdale, vol. III, pp. 305-6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 207 b.

## 3

(Chapter I, p. 14)

## MONASTIC CAPITALISM

In his introduction to vol. III of the *Chronicon de Melsa*, Dr Bond thus sums up the impressions derived from his study of the text (p. xxxix):

"The character of the present chronicle, and equally of other records of religious houses, impresses the reader with the strong conviction that, despite the nominally severe routine of monastic life, the temporal affairs of the house were the principal matter of concern with the majority of the inmates. The tone in which the several abbots are spoken of shows that those were held in highest estimation by the fraternity who evinced most acuteness in conducting the secular business of the house. The ordinary management of affairs must needs have filled the minds of the monks with other subjects than those they were presumed to be engrossed in. The duties of the various offices divided among the members of the convent were of a secular character. In the list of the monks drawn up by Burton in the year 1393, full half the number are noted as holding offices requiring considerable attention to business. The abbot himself,—who, it is abundantly evident from the present chronicle, was pretty constantly engaged in litigation and other business of more than ordinary difficulty,—the cellerar and sub-cellerar, the chamberlain, the bursar, the porter, the precentor, and sacristan, had each under his management the funds allotted for the support of his own department; and we find enumerated a granger of Skyrne, a monk of the bakehouse, a master of the cattle, a bailiff of Skypsea, and keepers of the two infirmaries, for the monks and for the laymen. In a great establishment such as that of Meaux Abbey, these offices would involve laborious duties. Then we know that monks were deputed to serve in chantries at a distance from the monastery, and a relaxation of the strictness of living resulted from their freedom from control."

St Peter Damian complains, in a letter to Pope Alexander II, of the litigious and warlike character of his fellow-Religious. The lawcourts are packed to suffocation with monks and priests, "the cloisters are emptied, the gospel is closed, and laws and legalisms flow from the mouth of ecclesiastics. Nay, would that we were at least content with quarrels in legal form! We rather run to arms, to arms; we hurl weapons against weapons, and, contrary to the Rule of our Order, we fight with steel rather than with words." Secular lords, after this bad example, behave still worse; each tries to mount and tread the other down; they invade each other's possessions, "and presently they are told to burn the peasants' thatched roofs, pouring out unblushingly to these unwarlike rustics the gall of that most atrocious envy which

they are unable to vomit upon their own enemies; then are the Psalmist's words literally fulfilled (Ps. x, 2), 'Whilst the wicked man is proud, the poor is set on fire'"<sup>1</sup>.

Petrarch writes, in his *Epistola de Nuptiis Diaboli*: "The Cistercians' buildings nowadays rival the towers of princes; and not only the monks' own quarters but even their ox-stalls and sheep-stalls, both in size and in quality, in beauty of structure and form, surpass any royal palace; and, whereas it ought to be said that the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and they take it by force, on the contrary some say that they take the earth by force, expelling their neighbours and poor folk at any price, and by all means, from their dwellings and their little holdings.... The peasants cry aloud that they are being driven forth from their fields." So far as buildings are concerned, the author of *Piers Plowman's Crede* expresses the same scandalized admiration for a great Dominican monastery (ed. T. Wright, p. 460). Here, again, is a description by a sympathetic and orthodox historian of today: "On approaching an abbey, men's eyes were almost always attracted by the amplitude and superabundance of the buildings. The walls were thick, and the precincts were far-spreading; towers and pinnacles stood out all the more conspicuously that they were generally unrivalled in their dominance." The author calculates the united monastic revenues in France, before the Revolution, at 180 million francs, omitting three items which defy calculation—occasional benefactions, profits from begging, and the value of church furniture, plate, etc. (p. 12). France had more than a thousand abbeys (p. 29); to these, for the Middle Ages, we must add at least three or four thousand priories<sup>2</sup>. For the method by which these lands were sometimes acquired, see *Acta Murensia*, pp. 44, 61 (quoted in *Med. Village*, p. 143, note).

## 4

(Chapter I, p. 15 and III, p. 34)

## MONASTIC MAGNIFICENCE

It is very valuable, in the study of original authorities, to get a chance of controlling one witness who is on his guard by another witness off his guard. We have seen what non-monastic observers thought of monastic magnificence; in this appendix we may confront two monastic witnesses with each other—the minister-provincial of the English Carmelites with the abbot of one of the greatest Benedictine houses in Flanders.

<sup>1</sup> *Epp.* lib. 1, 15; P.L. vol. 144, col. 227.

<sup>2</sup> P. de la Gorce, *Hist. religieuse de la révolution française*, vol. 1 (13th ed. 1917), p. 7; cf. p. 28.



Gilles li Muisis (1272-1353) wrote, no doubt, for a limited circle of readers, mainly within his own community; he is therefore very frank. We need not take him quite literally; we must bear in mind that a critic, on such occasions, may well say rather more than he would defend in cold blood; but his general testimony resembles so closely that of non-Benedictine critics, that we cannot doubt of its substantial accuracy.

Thomas Netter of Walden, on the other hand, was the great anti-Wycliffite champion of his generation [1380-1430]. The vigour with which he disputes every foot of the ground with Wyclif on those points on which he does choose to join issue formally with the heresiarch gives all the more significance to his silence on more important matters. Wyclif and his followers had far more serious grievances against the monks than this of extravagance in building: on those more serious points, as I indicate elsewhere, Walden and his fellow-apologists are practically silent.

(a) Thomas Waldensis, *De Sacramentalibus*, ed. 1759, tit. xix, chap. 149 (cf. chaps. 147-8 before), col. 897.

"After the monks' churches, he [Wyclif] goes on to slander their buildings. 'Let us not' (he says) 'be exceeding adulterous with our great churches and buildings and images and windows'; and again in his *Triologus* (c. 29) he saith of the Apostles that they had no house-property and were altogether without lofty buildings, sumptuous at the expense of their neighbours. To this I answer: We all know that the Apostles had no lofty houses of their own, since even the Lord in His Godhead hath told us that He Himself lacked a house, whether lofty or lowly, while He lived in tabernacles; for He said unto David (II Kings vii), 'I have not dwelt in a house from the day that I brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt even unto this day; but have walked in a tabernacle and in a tent.' So also, at the beginnings of the New Law, the churches had perhaps to wait many years before they were settled in lofty buildings, and many years more before the Apostles came into possession of houses or fields. Yet were they not so far removed from lofty houses as God had been at the beginning of the Old Law, saying that He had dwelt in no house whatsoever from the going forth out of Egypt unto that day; for the Apostles began forthwith to dwell in that temple whereof it is written at the end of Luke, 'and they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy; and they were always in the temple praising and blessing God.'"

Walden then tries at great length to weaken the force of St Bernard's complaint against the too sumptuous churches of his own day; after which he proceeds:

"To come at length to the other buildings of cloistered folk, who also, like the Apostles, have renounced all property in buildings. If thou dost rail against their lofty height and ample size, know that Christ required a lofty and ample house for the religion of His New Sacrament, saying (Mark xiv, 15): 'He will show you a large dining-room [*coenaculum*] furnished, and there prepare ye for us.' This

*coenaculum*<sup>1</sup> is a type of [supplet] the refectory of the Religious, wherein also Christ instituted His own refection, saying (Mark xiv, 14): 'Where is my refectory—*refectorium*, where I may eat the pasch with my disciples?' And again He said (Luke xxii, 11): 'the guest-chamber [*diversorium*]' ; and this was 'a large dining-room [*coenaculum*] furnished, and there prepare' (*ib.* 12). And this building was lofty; for St Ambrose writeth in his tenth book, commenting on this passage of Luke, [to the effect that the height of this building betokens the great merit of Christ's host or of his dwelling]. Wherefore, I say, that house is described as loftily built which was ordained as a refectory for Christ and His disciples; and it betokened the lofty sanctity of its Guest. So again, immediately after Christ's ascension, His disciples came together to a lofty dining-room on an upper story, as it is written (Acts i, 13): 'When they were come in, they went up into an upper room [*coenaculum ascendebant*] where abode Peter and John and James,' whereof the Venerable Bede writeth: 'This doth betoken that loftier place whereunto Peter and the sons of Alphaeus had ascended, being raised now from their earthly conversation to greater heights of knowledge and virtue.'"

Walden next quotes Augustine and Bede and Rabanus Maurus to the same effect, finding (or inventing) in this last an etymology which serves his purpose admirably; *coenaculum*, it appears, means literally a room three stories from the ground—*tertium tectum a fundo*! To this three-storied house, therefore, "the Apostles ascended to meet, as it were, the Holy Ghost; there they dwelt from the Ascension unto the day of Pentecost. I would here spare Wyclif, did not Faith constrain me to unmask his mendacity. What will he now say to support that assertion of his, that the Apostles altogether lacked lofty houses? We see how they retained lofty buildings for a lodging, dwelt in them, hired them; how can they have altogether lacked them? even as he cannot so be described who dwelleth in such a hired house, so also he who continually dwelleth in a lofty building cannot be said altogether to lack it. Lo! then, how the Apostles ascended to this dining-room, this lofty building on the third story, to dwell there. In that lofty building did they elect the twelfth apostle in place of Judas... It was in a lofty dining-room that Peter, sending the rest out, raised Tabitha from the dead. It was at the very top of the house of Simon the Tanner that Peter went up to pray at the sixth hour, and saw the reconciliation of the Gentiles in that vision of the great linen sheet

<sup>1</sup> It will be noticed how much all Walden's arguments depend upon the assumption of the verbal inspiration, not only of the Bible but of the Vulgate translation of the Bible: cf. no. 14 of my *Medieval Studies* (2nd ed.), pp. 17-22. The roots of Bibliolatry go as far back into the Middle Ages as do the roots of Puritanism. To bring out Walden's points, I give all these texts as they stand in the licensed Roman Catholic translation (Douai). It may be doubted whether John Bunyan ever argued from Scripture more literally, or more inaccurately, than this Oxford Doctor of Divinity whom England sent as one of her representatives to the great Councils of Pisa and Constance.

let down from heaven. It was in a lofty dining-room that Paul continued in preaching before the multitude until midnight. How dares he to say, therefore, that the Apostles altogether lacked lofty buildings? Let him tell me where, in the Scriptures, they are said as often to have dwelt in lowly houses." He then quotes Jerome's commentary on Philemon 22, "prepare me also a lodging," where, though it is admitted that the room thus ordered may have been on the ground floor, yet we may reasonably assume first, that it must have been large, to accommodate the multitude who would flock to hear him, and, secondly, that it would be in some quarter of the town "not abhorred by reason of its vile neighbourhood." He then continues: "Lo! how Christ, from the beginning, dwelt in lofty and ample houses; how the Apostles also did not lack such; how Peter and Paul had these lofty houses and how Paul ordered that ample room should be prepared for him—a lodging far different from those of the Wycliffites—one situated in an open part of the city, neither adjoining places of common sport nor abhorred by reason of its vile neighbourhood, such as these Lollards hire for themselves, derelict huts on the outskirts of villages! Never did Christ thus, wherever he went to preach, never did the Apostles. That (as Jerome saith) can have been no small lodging whereunto those crowds of Jews were daily gathered together.

"But perchance Wyclif will somewhat contract his tongue, and plead: 'Yea, but the Apostles did thus as Apostles; it is a different matter with Religious, for whom the smallest cell would suffice; nor need lofty *coenacula* be sought for their bodily repose, as the Religious of our own times [*moderni*] have built dormitories for themselves.' It is enough for me that he hath lost that support which he had hoped from the Apostles; but let us come to this case of [*modern*] Religious. I will bring him to our patriarch Elias<sup>1</sup>, who dwelt in the upper chamber [*coenaculum*] of a certain housewife [III Kings (I Kings) xvii, 19]... Again, his disciple Elisha accepted the *coenaculum* made for him at the house of the Shunamite woman (IV Kings iv, 10)... Therefore these saints dwelt [to borrow Wyclif's words] 'in lofty houses' since *coenaculum* signifieth (as I have said above) a building as high as the third story... Let Wyclif say what he will, and blaspheme as he will, yet the building of churches, the construction of monasteries, the rearing of buildings proper for churches and things monastic, even high or lofty in moderation, according as circumstances or the concourse of people shall demand, these things have always been pleasing to God, proper for Apostles and apostolic men, and commendable to all pious minds." He concludes with a column of praise for the priest

<sup>1</sup> Walden was minister-provincial of the English Whitefriars (Carmelites). A legend which all these Carmelites were then professionally bound to adopt, but which no modern scholar of any party dares to defend, traced the Whitefriars back to Elias, who had founded the Order in his hermitage on Mount Carmel. The great Jesuit scholar, Papenbroeck, on the verge of the eighteenth century, was denounced to the Inquisition for writing against this legend.

Leporinus, whom Augustine commends to posterity for having spent all his substance on building a monastery, church, and hospital.

(b) *Poésies de Gilles li Muisis* (ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, Louvain, 1882), vol. I, pp. 155-61:

*"Note concerning the Abbots*

O ye lord abbots, it is your fault altogether<sup>1</sup>; every day ye will be riding along the high-road; ye set all your purpose upon living in great state; know ye that God (as I greatly fear) is thereby provoked to wrath. . . . Ye abbots, ye are often living at ease in your courts; ye should rather be the first in the minster to pray God and to chant psalms with the brethren. . . . Did St Benedict wear the most costly cloth? had he palfreys which aroused men's envy? did he feed daily on delicious meats? Nay, but he took close care of his monks. . . . Pride is a sin which I dread sore; for pride drove Lucifer from paradise. I will tell thee true, if thou wilt hear me; pride sendeth many men riding down the highway to hell. . . . 'Pride?' says one, 'what sort of thing may that be?' And I reply to men, 'Ask the priest: look to right and to left, and you will see far more than your forefathers ever did.' See these abbots and monks, how they ride as though the enemy were spurring after them. They ride with a great meinie; they grow more and more; ye may know them by their cry like a flight of crows. Palfreys and sumpter-mules they lead in their train; knights and citizens envy them sore; my lord St Benedict never lived thus, and therefore it is that priories and abbeyes go now from worse to worse. In truth, for the great moneys that are spent now, and the pomp that they show, no man loveth to be a mere cloisterer; they would fain ride abroad the whole week long; they would fain be holy, yet they care not for the pain of holiness. Therefore all envious folk say one with another, 'Who are these outriders?' 'They are religious; that is an abbot of such and such an house; that other is such and such a prior; look at their great pomp! are they not pleasure-loving folk?' Their fathers and their mothers never earned the moneys that these men go spending in all this display; it was given them of old to lead a holy life; little need we marvel that men look enviously at them now."

5

(Chapter II, p. 19)

MONKS AND CANONS

The main distinctions are clearly noted by the great thirteenth-century canon lawyer Hostiensis (Cardinal Henry of Susa) on p. 299 *a* of his *Summa Aurea* (Venice, 1570). We may note a farther difference among

<sup>1</sup> That the monks in general have fallen away from the Rule; see other extracts in Appendix 36.

the canons regular themselves; whereas the Austin canons might serve parish churches (by twos and twos) with episcopal permission, the Premonstratensians needed no such permission, but had a general licence from the pope.

"In what do monks and canons regular agree, and wherein do they differ?

"They agree in the three Substantials with all other Religious in the world [*i.e.* the vow of Poverty, Obedience and Chastity]. Wherefore not even the canon regular may possess private property, nor disobey his superior; and it is clear that all are bound to chastity. Again, neither Order may go out of his cloister except for some cause at the abbot's command and at the demand of the convent's necessity. Neither monk nor canon, therefore, may follow lectures on [civil] law, or on physic; both must sleep in common and wear a common dress, and both Orders are bound to hold Provincial Chapters.

"They differ in certain particulars; for, whereas it is forbidden that monks should be left alone in villages or towns (*Decret. Greg.* lib. III, tit. xxxv, c. 2), yet in that place there is no special warning for canons. But we must take the same principle of law as applying to both, since there is the same reason for both; wherefore licence is granted even to monks, but with this difference, that a cure of souls is more easily granted to a canon regular than to a monk, and that canons regular serve a less rigid rule; for they differ with regard to flesh-eating and dress and in certain other matters, as all men may see and know."

## 6

(Chapter III, p. 34)

### ABBATIAL DIGNITY

The abbot of La Cava "was absolute ruler over a vast domain—a sort of State within the State—scattered, it is true, but containing more than 90 towns, castles and villages, over which the kings of Naples themselves had scarcely any claim" (Cava, p. 256; cf. pp. 261, 263). In the tenth century, the abbots of St-Martial were lords of the town of Limoges, and the viscounts took the oath of homage to them (*Éc. des Chartes, Positions des thèses*, 1899, p. 53). Here, again, is Muratori's summary of the possessions of Farfa (*Scriptores*, vol. II, ii, p. 295, Milan, 1726): "Certe ea olim fuit Coenobii illius opulentia, ut Ludovicus Jacobillus in Lib. de Episcop. Spolet. scribat, vetusta superesse monumenta, quae fidem faciunt, *possedisse Farfenses Monachos in variis Provinciis Ecclesias et Coenobia 683. Urbes duas, videlicet Centumcelles cum suo portu, et Alatrium; Castaldatus 5. Castella 132. Oppida 16. Portus 7. Salinas 8. Villas 14. Molendina 82. Pagos 315. Complures Lacus, Pascua, Decimas, Portoria, ac praediorum immanem copiam.* Ita ille, quorum tot testes habemus, quot veteris tabulas

ejus Monasterii Chartularium adhuc incolume servat." Here, again, are the words of Branche, who certainly holds no brief against the monks, and from whom Montalembert takes one quotation which suits his thesis. He is speaking of that fatal wealth and power which made the abbots into barons (pp. 414-17):

"Oublieux comme des hommes purement féodaux des prescriptions saintes de charité, d'humilité, d'égalité qu'avaient proclamées les fondateurs des vieilles abbayes où ils régnaient, ils ne virent bientôt dans les hommes du peuple que des vassaux et non des frères. Ils imposèrent en conséquence de ce système [p. 415], à ces sujets devenus leurs mainmortables et taillables à merci, toutes les redevances capricieuses de la féodalité, ou bien les maintinrent et les conservèrent, quand ces droits étranges leur furent concédés... [p. 416].

"Or, ces droits si odieux et si vexatoires, sinon toujours par leur valeur, du moins par leur nature, par le principe féodal qui les avait introduits dans les monastères, rendaient les moines chaque jour de plus en plus étrangers au peuple du sein duquel ils étaient d'abord sortis. Il ne les considéra plus comme des pères par l'amour spirituel, comme des frères par la charité [p. 417], par les secours infatigables qu'ils lui donnaient dans les premiers temps; mais comme des maîtres, comme des seigneurs. Au milieu de ses souffrances, il les confondit dans sa haine ou du moins dans sa désaffection avec les seigneurs des châteaux. Les influences si remarquables et si heureuses qu'avaient eues sur son sort les monastères, et que sous quelques rapports ils conservaient encore, furent vaincues dans ses souvenirs par les peines qu'il ressentait d'eux."

Farther evidence may be found on p. 181 of the *Chronicle of St-Bertin* (constant struggles for the abbacy, and actual warfare, even before the popes had introduced the *commendam* system); Lamborelle, p. 86; Marquiset, pp. 43, 266 (cf. p. 93); *Wenlok*, pp. 104, 108-9, 117, 120, 124-5, 205; Berlière, *Honorius*, p. 479; Delisle, p. 78; Leclerc and Renan, vol. 1, pp. 65-6; Jocelin of Brakelond, C.S. p. 40 (abbot armed); Westlake, pp. 6, 59.

## 7

(Chapter v, p. 71)

## MEDIEVAL SPORT AND DANCE

The discussion started by the evidence printed in my first volume has now run to some length, in the Appendix to Mr G. K. Chesterton's *The Superstitions of the Sceptic*, in an article by him in *The Dublin Review* (Jan. 1925), and in farther documentary evidence which I have printed in *The Review of the Churches* (July, 1925), *The History Teachers' Miscellany* (March and April, 1925), and *The Medieval Village* (p. 559).

Mr Chesterton relies entirely upon a single passage from St Thomas Aquinas, which he has evidently not sufficient Latin scholarship to construe correctly; it is strange that the editor of *The Dublin Review* or some theological friend should not have intervened to save him from such an obvious blunder. In *The Review of the Churches*, I appealed to him to name a single orthodox writer between St Thomas and 1800 who understands St Thomas in the sense required by his own present argument, and he has made no reply. On the other hand, every medieval commentator whom I have met takes St Thomas's words—or those of Albertus Magnus, from whom St Thomas has copied almost verbally—exactly in their plain sense, as condemning the dance with only rare exceptions. St Antonino of Florence and Johann Nider and Guillaume Pépin were all Dominicans, familiar with Albert's and St Thomas's writings, and they all describe the dance as, in general, a manifestation of the seven deadly sins. "It is a very perilous sport," writes Nider, "for seven reasons; whereof the first is, that dancing had its first beginning from the devil"<sup>1</sup>. "It is a grievous minister to lechery. . . . In the dance, folk sin in a sense against every Sacrament of the Church." Again: "To dance habitually—*ex consuetudine*—even though it be not done with corrupt intention, is a mortal sin, whether it be done on holy-days or work-days." Apart from Dionysius's long treatise from which I quote in my text, he recurs to the subject in art. 25 of his "Directions for the life of Gentlefolk" (*Directorium Vitae Nobilium*; *Opusc.* p. 788). Here again, it must be noted, he is not moralizing for cloisterers or ascetics, but for the model Christian gentleman. He writes: "I think he will not delight in dancing or playing or jesting or attending spectacles, or looking on at tournaments and jousts. Moreover, if we consider attentively and with heartfelt compassion what, how many and what sort of torments our Lord and Saviour, the only-begotten Son of the Father, bore for our sins—how He was nailed with outstretched arms for our salvation to the cross, and hung there with His whole most sacred body most violently and painfully stretched and strained, with the most vehement and unthinkable dolour and torment—then we shall by no means be inclined to dances and the other vanities aforesaid. Similarly, if any noble and powerful person wisely considers how the Son of God, in His burning love to us, vouchsafed for the sake of our redemption and edification to suffer so many and great mockeries and curses and blasphemies and insults, and to be mocked as a fool in a white garment, and thus to be led through the streets of Jerusalem, and to be crowned with thorns and clothed derisively in purple, and to be spat upon in the utmost contempt—then from the bottom of his heart he will condemn that utterly vain adornment of garments, and the decking of his head with roses and garlands, or gold and gems and goldsmiths' work; nor will he be able to stretch out his arms with pleasure to the

<sup>1</sup> *Præceptorium*, pr. vi, c. iii (ed. Douai, 1611, p. 453). Antonino's and Pépin's judgements are fully quoted in *The Review of the Churches* and *Hist. Teach. Misc.*, l.c.

dance, nor will he with such pampering and adornment, so vainly and so delicately, treat his own vile and miserable body, which must so soon be resolved into dust and ashes, into corruption and stench; but he will afflict himself with the works of penance. Furthermore, if a man regard diligently and frequently with how many and great sins he is filled, to how many and what sort of perils he is exposed, by how cruel and cunning enemies to his salvation he is surrounded, then dances and other vanities will become nauseous to him. Moreover, dances (and especially those of nobles and great folk) are most perilous; nay, in general—*ut communiter*—they are unspeakably vicious; and in those dances the devils wield as many swords to slay men's souls, as many cups of venom to poison them, as many snares and nets to deceive and take them, as there are present gaily-dressed and comely persons, by the sight of whom, by talk and laughter and touch and singing and listening they entice and inflame each other. There also do demons smite vain hearts with their naked and two-edged swords; for in dances cloaks and mantles are cast aside, and the dancers show themselves freely to each other. Again, they begin to dance at the moment when they are most disposed to carnal affections and vain delights and consent to all devilish suggestions; to wit, after rich food and heating cups and riotous feasting. Therefore, in such dances, souls are wounded in manifold and most grievous ways. And the dances themselves are the devil's processions; for those who sing at the dance are as it were the devil's clerics or nuns, while those who stand by and consent are as it were the lay-brothers and lay-sisters of the evil spirits. Let us deeply consider how many evils are daily wrought, how enormously God Almighty is constantly dishonoured, how many souls are perishing every hour, what an innumerable multitude is oppressed with dire and manifold adversities and woes and afflictions, and we shall look upon dancing as madness. Let us regard also how we are in this world as in a valley of cares and tears, and as it were in darkness and the shadow of death, and sent as into banishment in order to weep constantly for our sins and to fight against our unseen foes; and then we shall understand how vicious and vain and foolish it is to dance and leap and take fleshly delight, and to be intent upon games and jests and other undisciplined acts—*dissolutionibus*. O! if man would consider how unspeakably God is displeased with their sins and with the aforesaid vanities; how sadly and variously they harm themselves thereby; what joy they give to the devils and what sadness to the holy angels, then they would fight to the death against vices and bewail them with all bitterness. Lastly, the Church, moved by many, and great and reasonable causes, hath strictly forbidden tournaments and jousts, so that whosoever is slain at them may not be buried in hallowed ground; therefore it is a most mortal sin to practise them. Likewise, it is not without mortal sin to go and look at such, and to consent unto those who practise them. Therefore neither those who practise nor who visit them nor who consent unto them may be absolved in confession, nor can they with a good conscience come unto the sacra-



ments of the Church, unless they are truly penitent and steadfastly purposed to avoid all such things for the future."

It will be noted how unfavourable Dionysius is here not only to the dance, but to all sports and recreations. In detail, it is true, he condemns only the dance and the tournament; but his attitude towards amusements in general is strongly puritanical; *ludere ac jocari* is no part for a serious Christian. This view was shared by the great mystic Ruysbroeck, who wrote: "to spend one's time in jests and quips is to waste our time, and is no small fault in good men"; and here the reference is not merely to monastic asceticism, but to the strict Christian ideal in general<sup>1</sup>. So, again, thought the German preacher, Georg Morgenstern of Leipzig, at the end of the fifteenth century. He says: "The unwise virgin is a lover and frequenter of dances. For the dance is a perfect work of the devil, wherein either the dancers or the on-lookers commit every kind of mortal sin: wherefore the dance is that infernal circle whose centre is the devil. Woe to them that dance, and to them that consent thereunto." And a few pages later, those are in mortal sin "who voluntarily permit games of dice or cards or the like in their houses, or even dances or other vicious conventicles." Again, one of the three worst sins commonly committed by villagers is that "they busy themselves with dances on the Sunday or holy-day, whereby the holy-day is most chiefly violated, or they are occupied in games, whereby again the Sabbath [*sic*] is violated, or they spend the solemn day in other vanities. And commonly all the calamities which fall upon the peasants come from this, that they hallow not the Sabbath as in that commandment: *Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day*: which is to say: 'Thou shalt spend all that day on God's service; men ought to attend at divine service, both morning and evening, and hear God's word; then after dinner they ought to discuss with their children and their servants that which they have heard preached by their pastor; and again, at eventide they should visit the church and the graveyard to pray faithfully for those from whom they have received their goods'"<sup>2</sup>.

On this point, I have received valuable support from a letter communicated by Dr G. R. Owst to *The Times Lit. Suppl.* of Jan. 28, 1926: "None of the sources hitherto printed, as far as I know, makes it clear that sports *as such*—not merely wanton sports—were forbidden by the Churchmen, as do the following: The author of a 'Mirroure for lewd men' proceeds to deal thus with a popular *Objectio* to his rules for Sunday observance (MS. Harl. 45, fol. 110 b): 'But here may some men say thus—"Sire, we may noight preye alwey, ne alwey be at chirche, ffor we mote doo somewhat elles among. What yvel is it theigh I pleye at somtyme, or make som solace or merthe honestliche? Why schulde God be myspeide therwith, seth in that tyme I doo ne thynke none yvell?" Herto maybe answerd thus, that all the tyme that a

<sup>1</sup> *Opera*, Surius, Cologne, 1692, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> *Sermones contra omnem mundi perversum statum*, Leipzig, Wolfgangus Monacensis, 1501, f. 31.

man spendith in ydell pley and vanitees that is noght ordeyned to God, hit is lost...[and shall be so reckoned by God himself at the Doom].’ The condemnation of Sunday ‘wikkedness’ follows later as a *further* point in the discourse. This typical argument appears again, for example, in the fifteenth-century treatise known as ‘Jacob’s Well,’ in MS. Salisbury Cathedral Library 103, fol. 125 a: ‘But happely thou wylt sey, “Syre we may nozt alwey ben at cherche and preyin, and therfore what foly is it thowz I bourde and pleye? I thynke, non harm.” But thus I answeare that alle the tymes that thou spendyst in ydel play and in vanyte is lost...therfore he that wyll kepe wel the halyday he muste occupyen hym in gode gostly werkys and prayers and in heryng of sermouns, or in heryng or redyng on holy bokys...’ Only one half of this latter treatise has been printed so far by the Early English Text Society, from a transcript made by the late Dr Arthur Brandeis, of Vienna, who died last year. But Sir Israel Gollancz has now put the remainder of Dr Arthur Brandeis’s manuscript into my hands, and I hope to prepare it, with notes and glossary, for publication by the Society in one of their future volumes of texts. I may add that I have given some further references to the above subject in an article in the current number of the *Holborn Review*.”

8

(Chapter v, p. 81)

CONTINENTAL PEASANTRY—A MEDIEVAL SURVIVAL

(compare *Med. Village*, Appendix 39)

Taine (vol. 1, p. 487) quotes from the complaint of the province of Franche-Comté to the king in 1789. “Your majesty has in his army more than 30,000 serfs of our province; if one of these men becomes an officer and leaves your service with a pension, he must go back and live in the hovel in which he was born; otherwise, when he dies, the lord of the manor will take all that he possesses.” It was the survival of a common medieval custom; if a serf has left the manor, the lord may confiscate all that he leaves. It may be said that this particular injustice of the gallant officer pillaged by his lord was never felt in the Middle Ages; that Taine got his effect here by seizing upon the fortuitous contrast of a fragment of old world and a fragment of new in momentary juxtaposition. In so far as this plea were true, it would be only the more uncomplimentary to medieval society; for it would mean that the serf had then no chance of rising to a position in which the lord’s tyranny would show so crude a contrast. But the plea is not even literally true; such tragedies must often have happened during the evolution of the German *ministeriales* from their original servitude to a sort of official nobility, and in the similar evolution of the serfs of St-Gall, described with so little sympathy by the monk

Ekkehard. Moreover, in the *Miracles de St-Benoît*, a specific incident is recorded almost exactly correspondent to these of Franche-Comté (p. 218). The chronicler wrote about 1050; the story he undertook to tell of "one of the nobler miracles of this Prince of God [St Benedict], to excite greater joy for Christian veneration," seems to have happened about a century earlier.

"Hard by our monastery of Fleury, in the village of Bouteilles, dwelt one Stabilis, born of St Benedict's bondfolk. In process of time, under pressure of poverty, he left his native place, migrated into Burgundy, and settled where he could, at Auxonne. There fortune smiled upon him, and his own vigilant labour brought him wealth; he exchanged his ignoble rustic condition for the soldier's profession. Thence he rose still higher; until in this affluence of wealth, with stables of horses, hawks on his pack and hounds feeding from his hand, and the vigorous youths that followed in his train, he was tempted to cease his servile tribute, as one who was now as far removed from native law as from his native land; and then, raising the standard of frivolous liberty, he married a freeborn woman of noble race. Now therefore, swelling with his affluence of children and tempted to pride by his riches, he became unmindful of Him who raiseth the poor from the mire, and who endoweth the destitute with the throne of glory and the seat of princes; and, though the reproachful consciousness of servitude rolled through every corner of his breast, yet, setting his face as a flint, he utterly ignored St Benedict. When a man once asked him of the merits of this great Confessor, he swore a perjured oath by all the saints that he knew not even what that name might mean. But, ignore as he might, he was by no means ignored; and, in his very rebellion, even as he kicked against the pricks, he was caught in the chains of truth. After the lapse of many years, it befell in the days of our lord abbot Richard that one of our brethren, called Dodo, was set over our possessions at Dié. He, administering in detail the care thus committed to him, set himself strenuously to reform all that was decayed or that had been neglected by the sloth of his predecessors; and this brought him to that wretched and unstable presumption of my lord Stabilis. Questioned as to his condition, this man defended his affected freedom with all boldness of bearing and effrontery of speech, appealing to his parentage, as though Dodo had not known that it was of the offscouring of the people; and he could bring no proof to escape from discovering at least, without further enquiry, who St Benedict might be. Since he clung obstinately to his assertions, the case was brought for trial before Robert count of Troyes, who called together his nobles and considered the matter; but no argument could move the proud fellow's mind; wherefore, by common consent, it was resolved that, by God's judgement, justice should end the controversy by a single combat. Both sides accepted this; the appointed day came; and this spurious knight, seeking a loophole of escape like some slippery snake, refused the duel unless some adversary should be brought who could claim equal nobility. Then the *avoué* of St

Benedict, Letered by name, leapt forth at once, saying: 'Let the duel not be deferred for one moment on that plea; in me thou hast here a freeborn adversary, supreme in the authority of my forefathers' nobility. Join now in fight; and thou shalt plainly learn in what scales of justice God doth weigh St Benedict, to whose obedience thy stubborn neck is offered.' So saying, and armed with the sign of faith, he seized the staff and the shield, leapt into the lists, and challenged his adversary in all the certitude of victory. But that wearisome trickster, trusting in fraud and guile, though he hastened unwillingly to the place, yet seriously in his unwillingness he gave honour to Christ. Urged by his inward consciousness of guilt, as a testimony to truth, while Letered was unconscious of his trick, he held out the bondman's tell-tale half-penny wrapped in the edge of his sleeve<sup>1</sup>, fraudulently asserting that he owed nothing more to St Benedict, and boasting (in however faint a fashion) that he was ready to prove the truth of this by the judgement of battle. Our noble champion, roused by these words, though he knew not his adversary's trick, fell upon him with all his force to prove him a liar; when, O excellent miracle! this hidden coin changed to the shape of an enormous buckler, so great and so glittering that it struck unspeakable joy and amazement into the multitude of bystanders, some two thousand in number, whose tearful prayers to St Benedict were filling the air. All rushed to the spot; this new and miraculous birth was raised from the ground; and the fight was thus ended by an unheard-of laurel of victory. The silver coin kept its spiritual form for the space of nearly four hours; then, shrinking little by little, it resumed its former compass. The unstable *Stabilis*, confuted by this fight, remained thenceforward in perpetual stability under the lordship of the monks; nor did he, whom Benedict had won by such a doughty deed, dare again to deny his servile bond; for, when questioned as to what he had done, he publicly confessed his guile. The sign whereof is kept as an eternal memorial to posterity in that church, together with the other relics of saints."

It may naturally be asked how this halfpenny, shrunk now to its natural size, could testify to the miracle; but we may remember Erasmus's experience at Walsingham, where a bear's skin hanging from the roof was shown as conclusive proof that the building had been miraculously brought thither through the air<sup>2</sup>.

Every age and country has had its thousands of peasant saints, and France among the best. Renan and J. F. Millet have testified to singular beauty of character among the country folk whose faith they

<sup>1</sup> Or "hidden in the edge of his glove." Here, as in one or two other places, the style is not only involved but frankly ungrammatical. *Stabilis* held out the halfpenny, which every bondman owed as a poll-tax to the abbey, in some hidden fashion which made this outstretched arm seem like a mere gesture of defiance; as though, snapping his fingers, he had said: "That is all that I owe to St Benedict."

<sup>2</sup> *Colloquies*, ed. Tauchnitz, vol. 1, p. 348 (Bailey's translation, 1877, p. 244).

themselves no longer shared; they would be irrecusable witnesses, even if the vividness of their characterization did not itself enforce belief<sup>1</sup>. But these village heroes were men of two worlds; rooted in the patriarchal Catholic past, they had all the freedom of modern life to favour their healthy expansion; we cannot take that society as typical of the *Ancien Régime*. Even before 1789, no doubt, there were Arcadian virtues here and there; but there is no reason to suspect La Bruyère's picture of actual falsehood; in describing the peasant, he forces the light and shade no more than in his other Rembrandtesque portraits. "We see certain wild animals, male and female, straying about the countryside; black, livid and sunburnt; bound to that soil which they plough and dig with invincible obstinacy; they have something like articulate speech; when they stand upright, they show a human face; and, in fact, they are human beings. They retire at night to lairs in which they live on black bread, water, and roots; they save other men from the labour of sowing, ploughing and reaping the staff of life; and thus they deserve some taste of the bread which they themselves have sown." Twenty years after those lines were written, the great Benedictine scholar Martène started on his journey to collect materials among French abbeys and cathedrals for a new edition of *Gallia Christiana*. Coming to Autun, he found that this shrunken city had a cathedral, three great abbeys, and a priory; there were doubtless all four Orders of friars also. He writes: "When we were at Autun, the famine was extreme. We saw the poor folk utterly emaciated, with their skin glued to their bones, lying on the street pavement and crying aloud for hunger; and many—*plusieurs*—died of starvation. This reminds me of a thing which I found in the archives of St-Martin d'Autun, that in 1438 and 1439 there was so great a famine in Burgundy that the bushel of wheat cost thirty shillings, and barley and oats ten shillings, and that the poor ate bread made of a sort of clay found near the monastery of St-Martin"<sup>2</sup>. Passing thence to Dôle in the Jura, where the monastic population was far smaller, he found that "the town is not very large; but it is rich and populous". Exceptional instances of this kind must not be pressed too far; but, even if they stood alone, they would at least destroy the legend that modern poverty has its root in the dissolution of the monasteries. And they are far from standing alone. Champion gives similar quotations on p. 220: "'Our peasants, for the most part, are a hundred times more wretched than Caribs, Greenlanders or Esquimaux'; if Mme Roland alone had said this kind of thing, it might be pleaded that, as a pupil of Rousseau, she was exaggerating. But Arthur Young was indignant at the misery of our peasants: 'What a terrible burden for the conscience of great folk must these millions of laborious creatures be,

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*; A. Sensier, *J.-F. Millet*; the earlier chapters of both books. Millet's description of his great-uncle, the peasant-priest, is as fine as any of his pictures.

<sup>2</sup> *Voyage Littéraire*, 1717, pp. 164-5.

given up to hunger by the execrable maxims of despotism and feudalism!' The privileged classes admitted the evil which resulted in great part from the abuses which they themselves enjoyed. At Vendôme, Mirecourt, Condom, the clergy were persuaded that the population could not have exaggerated the weight of the load which crushed them down; they saw 'the most fearful misery,' 'sometimes so extreme that they thought it impossible to depict it.' 'Frankness and honour' forbade the nobility of Toul to dissemble the sad state of the people, especially in country districts. The nobility of Angoulême proposed to reduce the number of holy-days, so as to bring some alleviation to 'the extreme misery of the people'."<sup>1</sup> And in the succeeding pages he quotes still stronger complaints from the peasants themselves in their *cahiers*. At Suresnes, out of 300 households, 105 were dependent upon alms.

Attempts have been made to discredit these *cahiers* of 1789 as inspired by professional agitators; but the Catholic Wallon quotes from a contemporary priest who, as he points out, "was far from a revolutionary" (p. 184). "The abbé de Mesmont wrote these lines, which might have been written yesterday. '[The peasants] pay for banns of marriage, for dispensations, for betrothals, for marriage, for baptism, for first communion, for confession, for extreme unction, and for burial. They pay the bishop, the rector, the building fund, the curate, and the monks, without reckoning what is sent to Rome. Everything costs money. It is especially when a poor wretch has lost his wife or his child, his nearest and dearest, it is at that bitter moment that these Church dues, which at any time are unjust, become an actual insult.' As for public instruction, it was practically non-existent. 'It is quite necessary,' he wrote, 'that we should everywhere establish good teachers for elementary classes. This would be no more than justice; and *it is indispensable* that we should give the children this elementary schooling for nothing'."<sup>2</sup> And, writing more especially of the district in which he himself is living, he says: "three abbeys, a commandery [of Hospitallers] and several priories, are here consuming all the resources of the poor folk which our fathers committed to their care. The children are untaught, the sick are unconsolated, the

<sup>1</sup> It is characteristic of Prof. Michael that he reckons the large number of holy-days, without qualification, among the blessings which the serf owed to the Church (vol. 1, p. 41). He shows that, even as early as 1280, there were about 70 a year; and the number gradually increased. But these days of enforced idleness—which the lord was not always even charitable enough to divide with his serf—were among the heaviest burdens on the peasant and, as a matter of fact, about half of these holy-days were ignored, with the connivance of the landlords, even ecclesiastical. See *Med. Village*, index, s.v. *Holy-days*.

<sup>2</sup> Millet's great-uncle actually got into trouble with his fellow-priests for giving this gratuitous instruction in the early years of last century; at last "he besought the bishop, for charity's sake, not to forbid his teaching these poor children to read. I think I have heard that the bishop at last consented to let him go on with this work" (Sensier, p. 21).

aged are unsupported. Yet the population is increasing; so true it is that the shadow of a monastery brings fecundity"<sup>1</sup>.

Champion, in his tenth chapter, has collected the complaints of the *cahiers* against feudal dues and customs in 1789. Apart from grovelling homage-ceremonies which growing civilization felt to be thoroughly degrading, he enumerates other more material burdens; in some places, the lord sent his cattle into the growing hay (p. 141); almost everywhere was the monopoly of mill and oven (p. 142) or of winepresses (p. 145). The lord might hunt over the crops; the tenant might not defend his corn from game or pigeons (p. 147). Even the legal exactions were often illegally multiplied (p. 149); there had actually grown up a class of legal pettifoggers who earned their living by revising and garbling the records of customary dues; the clergy of one district besought the new Assembly "to compel ecclesiastical and lay lords to show their documentary title to all the servitudes, real or personal, which they enjoy or claim to enjoy" (p. 153). And, speaking of the peasant revolts which broke out in 1789, Champion decides that "the lords and their agents, under pretext of rights which had perhaps been lawful, had accumulated impudent frauds; and this passing madness which wreaked its vengeance upon them was provoked by an interminable series of iniquities" (p. 154).

But there is no page so illuminating for the understanding of the French peasant of 1789—and, *mutatis mutandis*, the English peasant who rose at the preaching of John Ball—as the conclusion of de Tocqueville's first chapter<sup>2</sup>. The words, which for their full force must be given in their original French, gain all the more significance from de Tocqueville's emphasis, earlier in this chapter, on the extent to which literal serfdom had already disappeared in France, though there was still a good deal left here and there, not least upon monastic estates. He writes: "Imaginez-vous, je vous prie, le paysan français du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, ou plutôt celui que vous connaissez, car c'est toujours le même; sa condition a changé, mais non son humeur. Voyez-le tel que les documents que j'ai cités l'ont dépeint, si passionnément épris de la terre qu'il consacre à l'acheter toutes ses épargnes et l'achète à tout prix. Pour l'acquérir, il lui faut d'abord payer un droit non au gouvernement, mais à d'autres propriétaires du voisinage, aussi étrangers que lui à l'administration des affaires publiques, presque aussi impuissants que lui. Il la possède enfin; il y enterre son cœur avec son grain. Ce petit coin du sol qui lui appartient en propre dans ce vaste univers le remplit d'orgueil et d'indépendance. Surviennent pourtant les mêmes voisins qui l'arrachent à son champ et l'obligent à venir travailler ailleurs sans salaire. Veut-il défendre sa semence contre leur gibier: les mêmes l'en empêchent; les mêmes l'attendent au passage de la rivière pour lui demander un droit de péage. Il les retrouve au marché où ils lui vendent le droit de vendre ses propres

<sup>1</sup> Wallon, p. 185. On p. 150 he quotes from a Jesuit who speaks equally plainly as to the general neglect of the poor by the Church.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, p. 45.

denrées; et, quand, rentré au logis, il veut employer à son usage le reste de son blé, de ce blé qui a cru sous ses yeux et par ses mains, il ne peut le faire qu'après l'avoir envoyé moudre dans le moulin et cuire dans le four de ces mêmes hommes. C'est à leur faire des rentes que passe une partie du revenu de son petit domaine, et ces rentes sont imprescriptibles et irrachetables. Quoi qu'il fasse, il rencontre partout sur son chemin ces voisins incommodes, pour troubler son plaisir, gêner son travail, manger ses produits; et quand il a fini avec ceux-ci, d'autres, vêtus de noir, se présentent, qui lui prennent le plus clair de sa récolte. Figurez-vous la condition, les besoins, le caractère, les passions de cet homme, et calculez, si vous le pouvez, les trésors de haines et d'envie qui se sont amassés dans son cœur."

## 9

(Chapter v, p. 83)

## PAROCHIAL VISITATIONS

## A. Totnes Archdeaconry, 1342 A.D.

Five churches appropriated to monasteries, in the order in which they occur in the record. (E.H.R. Jan. 1911, pp. 112-16.) The foot-notes will enable the reader, if he cares to search farther, to pick out the other monastic churches and compare their records with these five. I am here omitting Ipplepen, Brixham and Churston-Ferrers, because they were appropriated to alien priories, and might therefore stand less chance than the average; they were in fact extremely neglected. It will be noted that the visitor usually reports under three separate headings: (1) defects for which the parishioners were ordinarily responsible, (2) defects which ordinarily regarded the rector, and (3) state of domestic buildings, churchyard, etc.

"(1) Hennock. One cloth for the high altar is lacking, the surplices and the rochet are the worse for wear [*debilia*], the nuptial veil is lacking, as also are the frontals for all the altars; the missal and one of the phials are insufficient; the synod-book is insufficient and defective; the bell for carrying [the Host] to the sick has no clapper; the pyx for the Eucharist has no lock, nor has the font. It was enjoined upon the parishioners that they should make good all these defects before the next visitation, under pain of 10 marks. The legendary<sup>1</sup> is tattered [*corrosa*], the chancel too dark and the glass windows thereof are broken; and in rainy weather it beats through the midst of the principal window upon the high altar and upon the chalice during the celebration of Mass; the amendment of these defects is incumbent upon the abbot and convent of Torre, rectors of the parish.—The

<sup>1</sup> For this, and other service-books necessary to the full equipment of a church, see Rock, *Church of our Fathers*, ed. Frere, vol. IV, pp. 245 ff.



buildings of the vicarage, which is very poor<sup>1</sup>, are competent after a fashion [*aliqua liter*] considering the state of the benefice.

(2) Broadhempston. The censer chains are bad and the chrismatory has no lock<sup>2</sup>. It was enjoined upon the parishioners, etc. [*sic*].—Defects which concern the prior and convent of [B]<sup>3</sup>, rectors of the parish: to wit, the legendary is of monastic use, and a new competent legendary of Sarum use could scarcely be made for 5 marks.—Sir Simon, the new vicar there, has received nothing for dilapidations; [yet] all the buildings of his vicarage were ruinous and very rickety at the time of his induction. These he has partly repaired; but the defects now imminent in them could scarcely be repaired for 10 marks.

(3) Abbot's Kerswell. The cup for [carrying the Body of Christ to] the sick is lacking; also the frontals for the high altar and all the other altars; the grail<sup>4</sup> is of monastic use and ill-bound. The tropary<sup>4</sup> is insufficient; the pyx for the Eucharist is too small and lacks its lock. The font is not covered nor locked; one alb and one linen altar-cloth are wearing out; the missal is insufficient and of monastic use; the pyx for the Eucharist is much broken and lacks its lock. The chrismatory is wooden; the nave is too dark and ill-tiled [*male cooperta*]; there is no pall for the dead. The parishioners were enjoined to amend these things by the next visitation on pain of 10s.—The hymnary, collectary and capitulary<sup>4</sup> are insufficient. The chancel is too dark; the repair of these defects pertains to the abbot and convent of [B]<sup>5</sup>, rectors of the parish; which defects, as is reckoned, might be repaired at the cost of 5 marks.—Sir Robert, vicar of the parish, received nothing for dilapidations; for all the buildings of his vicarage, which is very poor, were rickety and ruinous at the time of his institution; yet the vicar hath repaired them competently, considering the state of the benefice, with the exception of the hall and the sitting-room [*camera*]; which hall and room could scarcely be rebuilt for £5.

(4) Dean-Prior. The ordinary vestments are worn; the image of

<sup>1</sup> The *Taxation of Pope Nicholas*, made in 1291, shows these monks paying the vicar £1. 17s. a year, and taking £5. 14s. 11d. themselves from the parish (p. 150 a). In this taxation, however, most of the items are understated, on all sides. At the Dissolution, they were clearing £10 a year from the parish. A vicar's ordinary allowance in 1342 was less than £4; see H. G. Richardson in *Roy. Hist. Soc. Transactions*, 1912, pp. 113–14. Torre,\* though not comparable to the greatest of the Benedictine houses, was by far the richest of the Premonstratensians in England; the abbot and fifteen monks, in 1539, had a revenue of £396 (Dugdale-Caley, vol. vi, p. 925).

<sup>2</sup> The consecrated host, the holy chrism for baptism, the consecrated oil, and the font were required by Church law to be kept under lock and key, lest their contents should be stolen for purposes of witchcraft.

<sup>3</sup> The living was appropriated to Studley priory in Warwickshire in 1291, the monks drew £5. 6s. 8d. from it and the vicar £1 (p. 149 b): at the Dissolution it brought the monks £34 clear per annum; see Dugdale-Caley, vol. vi, pp. 186–7.

<sup>4</sup> Service-books; see Rock, *l.c.*

<sup>5</sup> It was appropriated to Sherborne abbey; the monks drew £7 a year clear from the parish in 1291 (p. 151 b), and £7 at the Dissolution.

the Blessed Virgin lacks one hand; the crucifix is ill-painted and insufficient; all the surplices are worn; the chalice is unsteady on its foot [*clocitat*]; the images of St Mary and the patron saint of the church are ill-painted; the roof is defective and the glass windows are broken. The parishioners were enjoined to amend all defects by the next visitation under pain of 40s.—The legendary is lacking, and the chancel is insufficient and ruinous; the repair of these defects, as is asserted, pertains to the prior of [C]<sup>1</sup>, and they can scarcely be repaired for 16 marks. Sir Simon, the vicar, has received one mark for the defects of the buildings and fence.—The defects in the buildings and fence of the vicarage can be made good, it is reckoned, for 2 marks.

(5) [Name not traceable.] The legendary is of monastic use and insufficient. The antiphonary is worthless. The capitulary, collectary and hymnary are insufficient and rotten with age; the repair of these defects pertains to the abbot and convent of [D]<sup>2</sup>, who are rectors; they can scarcely be repaired for £5.—The vicarage buildings are competent enough for the state of the benefice."

### B. Diocese of Lausanne, 1416–17 A.D.

In reading through this visitation, I noted thirty specially bad cases among the 136 churches in monastic presentation. How many of these churches were actually appropriated to the monks (and not merely in their patronage), I have no means of discovering; apparently the majority were. Among these cases I have chosen, for reproduction here, three which seemed among the best and two of the worst; it was not easy to choose where all were very bad. I indicate for reference the other twenty-five bad cases; they occur on pp. 15, 24, 28, 29, 31, 42, 58, 60, 83, 92, 93, 135, 137, 156, 161, 165, 175, 177, 185, 186, 190, 193, 197, 198, 219.

"(1) Bérulle, p. 14. . . in the gift of the prior of [Perruoy], as the parishioners testified. Here they found no parson or rector, but a certain old woman gave them the key of the chancel. They found the Body of Christ and the consecrated chrism and oil upon the altar, to wit, the Body of Christ in a certain wooden box rotten with age, without a clean napkin, and the font unlocked in the nave, which had no door to its main doorway. [The visitors] asked who served the parish, and the parishioners answered that there had been seven different priests to serve it in one year.

(2) Montchérant, p. 47. . . in the gift of the prior of Payerne. The village has fourteen households; parishioners good, except four who are excommunicated [for neglecting to communicate within the year], yet they have not borne the sentence [of excommunication] beyond a year. The parson is Sir Peter Bourdin, who does not reside

<sup>1</sup> Plympton priory, which in 1539 was drawing £23. 10s. clear from this parish and its chapelry. In 1291 the monks were drawing £5 and the vicar £1.

<sup>2</sup> The context makes it fairly plain that the appropriators here are the monks either of Dartmouth or of Buckfastleigh.

there by reason of the poverty of his benefice. Here [the visitors] found the Body of Christ unlocked, in a wooden vessel. The following articles are lacking: two brazen vessels, one for keeping the Body of Christ and one for bearing [the Body] to the sick, *item* a glass vessel for bearing [the Body] on Corpus Christi Day; *item* a brazen cross. [Orders to parishioners to make good within the year.] We take no notice of holy oils or font, for there are none here, but they are baptized at Orbe [about three miles distant].

(3) Sombeval, p. 200. . . in the gift of the prior of the canons of the monastery of Grandval in the diocese of Besançon. The church is vacant by reason of the poverty of the endowment; for the said prior and canons take all the tithes there; wherefore the parishioners besought that a remedy might be provided.

(4) Bioley, p. 95. . . in the gift of the prior of Lutry. The parish contains twenty households; parishioners good except one, who has borne the sentence [of excommunication] more than a year [for having neglected to communicate last year]. The priest in charge is Sir Perrot Ysabel. Here [the visitors] found the Body of Christ and the other sacramentals not under lock and key; yet the Body of Christ was in a decent vessel and linen, and there were more than sixty [consecrated] Bodies. The following articles are lacking: two ciboria (one of brass for bearing the Body of Christ to the sick, and another for bearing the said Body on Corpus Christi Day); *item*, the roof over the main door<sup>1</sup>; *item*, four glass windows; *item*, the *indes*<sup>2</sup>; *item*, a breviary noted [for singing], at least for solemn festivals; *item*, a baptismal-basin for the font; *item*, the church needs repair both within and without. [Orders to parishioners to make all good within two years.] And it must be noted that the said parson, as his parishioners tell us, hath been and still is a public concubinary, keeping in his parsonage a certain concubine named Alice, whom he hath kept for the space of 38 years. The same parson is of small knowledge, and ignorant. Note farther that, on Tuesday morning, when the lord bishop would have confirmed the people there, the said parson, moved with malice, put water into the chrismatory and affirmed it to be chrism; and last Monday there was found in the said vessel but a small quantity which was used up [*implicata*] in the said consecration.

(5) Dombresson, p. 69. . . in the gift of the prior of St-Imer. Here are eighty households; parishioners good, except two who have borne the sentence [of excommunication] more than a year. The parson is Sir Aymon Bugniet, who is a man of evil life and dishonest conversation, keeping in his house a young concubine, as his life and deeds will be written more fully below. [The visitors] found the Eucharist under lock and key, in a wooden vessel without napkin, wherein were

<sup>1</sup> These little penthouses over the west door are characteristic of Swiss churches to the present day.

<sup>2</sup> I cannot identify this word, which comes frequently. It is some sort of book; perhaps the synodal decrees, of which each church was bound to keep a copy for reference.

more than 100 Bodies [of Christ]. And the following articles are lacking: three ciboria, two of metal and one of glass; *item*, a locked chest wherein the sacramentals may be kept in safe custody; *item*, two glass windows; *item*, the penthouse [*capitale*] over the main door; *item*, the censer needs repair; *item*, the commissaries ordered that a decent wall should be built under the tower, to separate chancel from nave. [Orders to parishioners to make good by Easter.] Here follow the matters wherein the said parson is at fault. *First*, he is a dicer. *Secondly*, a public concubinary. *Thirdly*, on the evidence of his parishioners, he took secretly into his church a certain store of shingles, which is sacrilege<sup>1</sup>. *Fourthly*, he keeps a tavern, and hath kept a dicing-house, in his parsonage. *Fifthly*, it is common report and fame that a certain merchant of Bienne was robbed at play in his house. *Sixthly*, he would bury within the chancel, against the will of his parishioners, a certain concubine of his who gave up the ghost within the said curate's house. *Item*, many other things also."

### C. Diocese of Worms, 1496 A.D.

*Zeitschrift f. d. Gesch. d. Oberrheins*, vol. xxvii (1875), pp. 229 ff. Extracts from the first five churches in monastic patronage. For the reader who wishes to pursue the subject I subjoin a list of the other monastic churches in the first half of the visitation, so far as I can identify them: Hilsheim, Dorndürkheim, Chapelry of St John, p. 263, Gandersheim, Ensheim, Herrenflersheim, Müllsheim, and Wachenheim.

"(1) Mörsch. . . The prior of [the Augustinian monastery of] Frankenthal presents to the living, and the parish is ruled by a brother of that Order. . . the brethren of Frankenthal keep the choir, the Body [of Christ,] and all the ornaments. . . the parish keeps the font, tower, bells and ropes, churchyard wall and stile, and bier. . . The curate and his clerk have vile, filthy and torn surplices and most filthy corporals; the chalice-cloths are most filthy. I found the Venerable Sacrament of the Eucharist broken into small pieces. . . The parson neglected a woman, who besought him by messengers to hear her confession and give her the Venerable Sacrament, but he put off visiting her. The parson excuses himself and lays it at the sexton's door; the sexton contradicts him and brought jurats and certain of the parish who say that this was through the parson's negligence, because she lived nearly ten hours after calling for him; yet she died without confession and ecclesiastical sacraments. Alas! this is a sorry business.

(2) Homersheim. . . in the gift of the prior of St George by Pfeddersheim. . . The missal is incorrect [*falsum*] and has no register. The baptismal register [*agenda*] is simply worthless. . . In the wall of the choir one of the iron frames of a window is broken, and this

<sup>1</sup> Roof-shingles are expensive, and the Swiss store them very carefully for future repairs of their houses.

might be dangerous; the parson must mend this. The fabric is well cared for.

(3) Dienheim. . . in the gift of the lord abbot of Eberbach [Cistercian], and it is ruled by a brother of that Order<sup>1</sup>. In the village is also a chapel of St Nicholas, called *Clausa*, where is a Brigittine convent incorporated with the abbey of Eberbach. Two Masses should be said there weekly, for it is sufficiently endowed, and these monks scarce say one. In the said chapel a perpetual light should be kept; there is none there now, and it is seldom closed; wherefore the beasts come in and defile the building. . . . The parsonage is altogether ruinous. . . . The parson has no key for the church fund [*depositum*]. He lives at the abbot's court; and once a certain woman was neglected at night in the matter of Church sacraments; the clerk knocked at the gate, but could not make himself heard by reason of the distance and the dogs' barking; wherefore the neighbours beg that you, reverend Father [bishop], may weigh the perils in your mind and impose the usual [duty of] residence upon the parson. There is a certain gild there which is negligently governed; the fabric is competently cared for.

(4) Oppenheim. . . in the gift of the brethren of St Catharine. . . . The altar [of the Lady Chapel] is made of four stones, and broken in front. . . the altar of St Agnes has a house [for its chantry-priest], but ruinous. . . . The brethren aforesaid have the maintenance of the parsonage, but it is so ruinous that he cannot live in it. The jurats and other faithful would gladly found a perpetual *salve* [*Regina*], but they fear to bring detriment to the endowments of the parsonage [*corporis plebanie*, perhaps 'parsonage-gild']; for it is from that that the presents [or 'contributions,' *praesentiae*] are increased. The brethren aforesaid, when they institute a new parson, take away part of his benefice, and present him conditionally. The parson that now is was presented on the condition that he must resign his church to the brethren in six years, and they have taken from the endowment of the parsonage, every year, 22 bushels of rye or thereabouts, and four barrels of wine; and this is on account of the augmentation of the presents, and the jurats and others are now in fear of the like<sup>2</sup>. . . . Jakob Ottinger, by his will, divided his goods into three portions; one for the poor, one for his year's mind, and one for the fabric; the fabric has received its share, but the poor have nothing, nor has his year's mind been founded, for the executors [two chaplains and three jurats] have made neither inventory nor account. The jurats complain bitterly of Sir Philip Drapp, that he is very negligent of the Masses for which his benefice is endowed. I told them to take proceedings according to the terms

<sup>1</sup> Canon law forbade monks (as distinguished from canons regular) to act as parish parsons; this law was strictly kept in England as a rule, but in Germany exceptions were quite frequent. See the case of Dolgesheim here below.

<sup>2</sup> The general sense is clear; the parishioners fear that, if they raised a fund for this perpetual *Salve*, the patrons would make this an excuse for levying farther tribute from the parochial endowments.

of the confirmation-deed, wherein it is written that there is a fine (which I do not now remember) to be given to the fabric-fund for Masses neglected; at last he [Philip] wrote to the lord Wendelin and to the keeper of your Lordship's seal, that I had fined him 40 florins. Most reverend Father, this man speaketh not the truth; I never spoke to him, nor have I even seen the man. The parson has no key for the parish fund.... There is a great confusion with the collection of the synodal-fees almost throughout your diocese; for now the sextons refuse, now the town criers, now the householders [*? heimbergenses*], unless they are hired for the job; yet they take their expenses none the less. 'This man is away just now; that man is poor; a third cannot be found at home,' and so forth. The fabric is well cared for.

(5) Dolgesheim. ... is appropriated to the abbey of Eberbach, and ruled by one of the monks.... The parson has no key for the Church fund.... A certain esquire called Hans Rens, dwelling in Freymersheim, is a jurat here; he hath often been summoned on Church business but hath seldom appeared at the synod; he himself claims to receive or elect other nobles as jurats, but the peasants refuse, not only because they [the nobles] bear no burdens, but also because they take the Church goods; for this man owes much to the Church, yet the poor folk dare not require it of him. Thus it is a great mistake where nobles are jurats, for they will lord it [over the rest]."

It may be added that no more favourable impression would be given by a translation of the register of Cerisy, dealing with the churches appropriated to that important Norman monastery from 1314 to 1457 (*Mém. Soc. antiq. de Normandie*, 1880, pp. 271 ff.). The number of excommunicated folk in these Norman villages seems to have been even greater than in the Lausanne diocese, where there was more than one in every fifteen households. These records illustrate the complaints of great churchmen, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, of the large numbers of excommunicates everywhere; for, apart from these thus registered, all who had dealings with such a man became, by Church law, themselves excommunicate *ipso facto*. Bishop Guillaume le Maire of Angers asserted in 1311 that many parishes had 300 or 400 excommunicates, "and I have known one with as many as 700" (*Lib. Guil. Major.* p. 477). At two of these Lausanne villages, Dampierre and St-Aubin, there were 54 registered excommunicates among 122 households; and at Payerne the clergy report in despair: "There are about 340 households, and the excommunicates are beyond count"—*infinitos excommunicatos* (p. 189).

## 10

(Chapter VI, p. 88)

## LINGARD'S JUDGEMENT

It is a calamity that monastic history should have been so much restricted, hitherto, to antiquaries who have sentimentalized (justly enough, up to a certain point) over the melancholy of monastic ruins, and to Roman Catholic ecclesiastics who, even apart from the censorship, have every temptation to suppress unwelcome truths. It is interesting here to compare a published sentence from the history which has been so long supported by one powerful religious denomination, and so superficially tested by accredited historians outside, as to rank for a few years as a classic, with a few pages from the private correspondence of that other historian who, next to Lord Acton, is admittedly the greatest among English-speaking Roman Catholics of the last hundred years.

(A) "It is remarkable that the evil repute of monks and friars dates from this period"—i.e. the publication of Burnet's *History of the Reformation*. (F. A. Gasquet, *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*, 3rd ed. vol. II, p. 492.)

(B) From a letter of the historian John Lingard to his friend the Rev. J. Kirk, of which the most pertinent parts are printed by Mr Chamberlin in his *Character of Queen Elizabeth*, and of which the librarian of St Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, kindly sent me a full transcript.

"Nov. 25, 1820. My dear Sir. I feel under considerable obligation to you for your kindness in forwarding to me a copy of the letter from your nameless correspondent... [According to his criticism], one of my great defects is that I do not sufficiently enter into the defence of the monks. I shall take it for granted that your correspondent does not believe the monks under Henry to have resembled either their predecessors in former ages, or their successors after the reformation. 1<sup>o</sup>, then I am asked why I do not explain why all submitted to the king's supremacy, when there must have been some in every community ready to brave persecution. Unfortunately the fact is that there were not any in most communities ready to brave persecution; and, if I must disclose the reason (he will perhaps approve of my silence in the history) I will answer with Card. Pole, that the monks of that period were men of little reputation, and had entirely [*prorsus*] degenerated from the spirit of their original institute. The only exceptions which he allows are in favour of the Brigittines, a single house<sup>1</sup>, and the Carthusians and Observantines, the least numerous of all the orders. The rest were a degenerate, time-serving class of men. This I have hinted in gentle terms in note of p. 216, and of it have given a convincing proof in note of p. 194, where, out of 66 theologians who in the convocation voted in favour of their royal master, two thirds, 42,

<sup>1</sup> Dr Lingard means, there was in England only one Brigittine house (Isleworth).

were abbots and priors of monasteries.—But why did I not at least defend the monastic state, and describe the benefits which the world had derived from it? Because I thought it unnecessary to swell out my work with remarks which had been repeatedly made by myself as well as by Dr Milner and other writers.—But then, ‘I recite the arguments *against* the Religious but never *for* them.’ Is this correct? Have I given any occasion for such an assertion? Here unfortunately your correspondent mentions no page: and I cannot possibly conceive to what passages he alludes unless it be to pp. 229 and 260, where I do mention the charges against them; and I should have been a fool not to do it, since it has been done by every protestant historian before me. But then I suppress the answers? No, they follow immediately, the best answers which my poor wit could devise. Perhaps he would have had me deny the whole charge altogether. I did indeed begin by doing so. Some of the proofs against the monks I could get over: but there were many which I could not. The very attempt convinced me that in many instances the charge was founded. What then was I to do, but to defend them in the manner I have done? To have met the charge by denying it, would have been to have acted contrary to my conscience, since I believed it in many respects true, and contrary to sound policy, because it might have provoked some one to lay before the public eye in a pamphlet or review that mass of whoredom and immorality contained in the MS. Cleop. E. iv. So many informations, confessions and convictions, if published, would make an impression which no vindication, however powerfully written, could efface.”

To avoid misconception, let me add that this MS. has since been printed by Thos. Wright for the Camden Society (1843), and that I do not think we can rely at all upon the personal character of the main accusers in those letters. But I have studied enough other evidence, as Lingard had, to realize that, though many or most of these particular allegations may be made at haphazard, the net result is what might have been expected from visitors determined to ferret out and to publish the real facts. The records left by two orthodox visitors on the eve of the Reformation, witnesses of unimpeachable veracity, give at least as gloomy a picture; I allude to Johann Busch in Germany and Ambrogio Traversari in Italy, with both of whom I shall deal in detail in my last volume.

## II

(Chapter VIII, p. 136)

### THE STIGMATIZATION OF ST FRANCIS

Even Professor Sabatier confuses the evidence a good deal here; on p. 405, for instance, he translates (or rather, paraphrases) Elia's letter in words which could scarcely have occurred to anyone who had not Celano's later and different description fixed in his mind; the result is extremely misleading.



Dr Walter Seton's article in *The Hibbert Journal* for July, 1925, seems still more misleading, as I attempted to show in my reply (*ibid.* Jan. 1926). He constantly obscures the issue by confusing normal with abnormal or miraculous stigmatization; he is inaccurate on some crucial points; and he dismisses Dr Merkt, who after all has written the most elaborate and fully documented study on this subject, in a few contemptuous words which suggest that he has not really read the book through.

The final form taken by the story of the Stigmata, and fixed at an early date, consists of at least five separable threads, or rather steps.

The full legend asserts, first, that there were five marks on hands, feet and side. Secondly, these resembled nail and spear wounds; and, thirdly, this resemblance was clinched by actual plastic models of nail-heads and nail-points in the saint's flesh. Fourthly, these had been somehow impressed upon his body by a supernatural visitant; and, fifthly, the time was the early autumn of 1224 and the place, Monte Alverna. Now, each of these points needs separate proof; and if we are to treat this subject from the purely historical standpoint, then we must test the documentary evidence at each step in succession. For, when we arrange them thus in logical gradation of simplicity, we see at once that conviction on the first point carries us very little way towards the fourth and fifth, nor does even the second bring us very much farther. The next step, however, is over a very considerable gulf; and the next again is almost as great. For, in the full interpretation of the story, as generally accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, the third assertion confronts us with a great marvel, and the fourth with a miracle. Let us therefore keep all these separate steps in mind; but for brevity of argument we may reduce them to three. The first two steps describe Natural stigmata, the next, Marvellous stigmata, such as we can only expect in a few most exceptional cases, and the last two, Miraculous stigmata, impressed by direct divine intervention.

For the first step, the evidence is conclusive; this is what moved Renan to put it in a category by itself. There can be no reasonable doubt that St Francis's corpse showed marks which were naturally interpreted as reproducing the five wounds of Christ, and that Frate Elia published this news officially to the world within a few hours of the Saint's death. But Elia's description, rightly translated and dispassionately analyzed, cannot prove more than this, that there were five wounds, four of which had dark cores which onlookers interpreted as "the blackness of nails," a phrase which might indeed mean "a sort of black nail-head," but need not mean any more than "blackness, as if the flesh had been pierced by nails," just as a sword-thrust with a rusty weapon would leave "the blackness of the sword." Yet this is by far the most detailed description given by any eye-witness. Others do indeed describe four plastically formed nails with extraordinary elaboration, but these witnesses speak only at second-hand. Others, again, claiming to be eye-witnesses, assert the miracle most passionately, but describe only "those sacred wounds," "the wounds as of a man crucified"; terms so vague that they can give no certainty in this difficult question. No single witness is both (1) an eye-witness, and (2) a describer of the plastically formed nails.

Judging from purely historical evidence, I do not see how we can altogether exclude the possibility that these phenomena do not even come within the

remarkable sphere of auto-suggestion<sup>1</sup>. Personally, I am inclined to believe that they do, and that the Saint's thoughts wrought upon his flesh as in other medically attested, though very rare cases. But the full story of the Seraph's appearance on Monte Alverna is in contradiction, on important points, with explicit evidence which it is difficult to rule out altogether. Those who support this story argue that, considering the place and the time, we could not expect to have more evidence than what has in fact come down to us. I do not think this; it would probably be easy to name a good many cases in which we have more definite evidence for an important event of 700 years ago. But, even if the plea be true, while it leaves the believer free to see a miracle here, it cannot be expected to influence the reader who infers no more than natural phenomena from the evidence as it stands. As I argued in answer to Dr Seton: "granted that [this plea is] right, the difficulty still gives pause to impartial historical students. It is true that we must not argue too confidently from silence; but still less must we take it easily for granted that silence gives consent. If an alleged transfer of land in Timbuctoo were being tried in a London court, it might be inherently impossible to produce the necessary native witnesses and native documents; and yet, in default of such evidence, the court could not possibly decide in the claimant's favour. If it be indeed absurd to demand really convincing evidence from the Italy of 1224, then it cannot be reasonable to blame those who, in default of such necessary evidence, decline to accept an unprecedented marvel or a miracle. Any theory, until it can produce sufficient evidence, must remain a questionable theory; no ingenuity can conjure more certainty into history than the actual historical documents afford. After all, 'the critics' are ready to accept better evidence if better can be produced, even at the risk of being taunted for having changed their minds, or for finding themselves somehow in contradiction with the great Renan. But, meanwhile, they are hardened in their refusal to go beyond what seems to them the legitimate evidence, by the confusion of thought which they seem to find in every champion of the Stigmata in the miraculous sense, or even in the sense of something more marvellous than any other well-attested case of auto-suggestion."

The crucial passage of Elia's letter runs: "Non diu ante mortem frater et pater noster apparuit crucifixus quinque plagas, quae vere sunt stigmata Christi, portans in corpore suo: *nam manus eius et pedes quasi puncturas clavorum habuerunt ex utraque parte confixas*, reservantes cicatrices et clavorum nigredinem ostendentes. Latus vero eius lanceatum apparuit et saepe sanguinem evaporavit. Dum adhuc vivebat spiritus eius in corpore, non erat in eo aspectus sed despectus vultus eius, et nullum membrum in eo remansit absque nimia passione."

The italicized sentence, which in Dr Seton's translation presents no very clear picture, I have ventured to render more exactly according to the Latin dictionary: "For his hands and feet had the punctures of nails, which [punctures] were pierced through on either side" [*i.e.* ran through from one side to the other]. Professor Housman permits me to say that he accepts this translation as accurate; and that, as he

<sup>1</sup> I have briefly indicated this in *From St Francis to Dante*, pp. 52, 177. But I must take this opportunity of correcting a blunder; while printing *nigredinem clavorum* correctly on p. 177, on p. 53 I misquoted this as *nigredinem ferri*.

understands Elia's words, they neither assert nor imply that the writer had observed plastically modelled nail-heads of flesh, still less nail-points bent into the flesh on the reverse side.

## 12

(Chapter XI, p. 166)

## POOR CLARES AND PROPERTY

Chartularies of the Clarisses' convents are naturally rare in comparison with others; but Father Oliger has quoted from some in Italy, and the Dortmunder Historischer Verein has published a very complete chartulary of the nuns of Clarenberg<sup>1</sup>. This shows, perhaps even more conclusively than the cases quoted by Oliger, how little these nuns held by Franciscan poverty in the original sense. There is literally nothing, I believe, in the whole book to make the reader suspect that he is dealing not with a Benedictine but with a Franciscan house. The foundation-deed recounts numerous endowments in land and rents (p. 323, A.D. 1339); on p. 254 there is a far longer list of such property in 1439, running to 5½ pages and including 65 items; on pp. 263-4 is a list of 16 different quarters from which the nuns received tithes, which were of course subtracted, whether directly or indirectly, from parochial endowments. They accept gifts of serfs and their brood with the land; they buy a serf with his brood on one holding (p. 182); they accept the illegitimate daughter of the count of Cleves with a rich dowry in 1463 (p. 271) and "the bastard daughter of count Adolf" under similar conditions in 1500 (p. 306). They sell a corrody (p. 298); they may be found on almost every page buying rents, which was by this time a recognized form of investment, but would have been condemned by most of St Francis's contemporaries as usurious; and they sometimes have to defend such purchases by actions at law (pp. 328, 330). Like the monks, they made money by attracting rich people to burial (p. 17). When a debtor could not otherwise pay, they took his land in mortgage (p. 292). They possessed a gold chalice, in contravention of an explicit statute of the General Chapter against such luxuries (p. 323); and they were endowed with money for pittances like other nuns (p. 324). We actually find nuns endowed with separate private property, a thing forbidden not only to Franciscans but even to the older Orders (pp. 279, 282). All these things may be defended on the ground of common sense; it is not probable that the majority of these nuns led a luxurious life, though many may have lived more comfortably, on the whole, than if they had had to face the struggles of the world. There is a pathetic touch on p. 163 (A.D. 1374), where Count Engelbert von der Mark gives 2½ acres of woodland to the convent, "that they may possess it, and

<sup>1</sup> Ed. O. Merx, Dortmund, 1908.

that the wood which falleth yearly therefrom may serve to warm them every night when they come from matins, and that they may think of us thereby and pray ever and evermore for us and our lawful successors, and take us into their prayers." Very human, again, is the noble founder's licence from the pope to be buried not in the friary in which he had now taken the vows, but in this convent of Clarenberg where his wife was a nun, and where she also would be buried when her day should come (pp. 48, 322). With these exceptions, the whole volume contains only the driest and hardest of business provisions. Analogous are the acquisitions of the Clarisses of Migette in Franche-Comté (*Rev. d'hist. franciscaine*, vol. II, 1925, p. 388).

With this we may compare an extract from a will dated 2 Ap. 1507, and proved 26 Ap. (P.C.C. Wills, 22 Adeane): "I Joyse Lee Widowe . . . [leave] by the licence of my lady Abbess my body to be buried in the wheer of the church of the minoresse of London als nygh to the buriall of my lady Talbott as conueniently may be . . . *item*, to dame Joisse [a nun of the house] . . . by the licence of my lady abbess . . . too haue xx marks [banked in a chest within the house of the minoresses, and to have 13s. 4d. a year] . . ." There is an article on the London Minoresses in *Archaeologia*, vol. xv.

## 13

(Chapter XIII, p. 189)

## AN UNWILLING PROSELYTE

"To the bishop of Exeter. Mandate to proceed to the execution of the mandate addressed to him, as below, by Alexander V, to whom it was set forth on behalf of Henry, donsel, son of John Witberi, donsel, of his diocese, that when in his eleventh year his father, whose eldest son he is, with the intention, as he believed, of excluding him from the paternal inheritance, handed him over against his will to the Friars Minors in the suburb of Exeter; that, fearing his father's threats and punishment [*m[i]nas et cruciatus paternos*], before completing his said eleventh year he unwillingly assumed and wore the habit and tonsure of the said Friars, who, perceiving that he was in no wise disposed to remain in the order, and that he would take an opportunity to escape, and fearing that if he remained in one place of the order he would the more clearly learn the asperity of the order within the year of probation and would consequently flee from such place, straightway, after the lapse of a fortnight from his entrance into their said house, for more than six months led him about like a vagabond, in order to deceive him, to remote places, now secular, now belonging to the order, now through towns, cities and castles, and now through devious country parts of England; that at length they brought him, against his will, to Wales, and placed him in the Friars Minors' house at Keyrmerthyn in the diocese of St David's, to prevent his

escaping from the order; that, thus among unknown friars and in a foreign land, he vainly supplicated the guardian to restore his secular garments and give him leave to return to the world, or at least permit him to depart naked; that the guardian, a Welshman, moved with anger, caused him to be kept close and forbade his going forth before the end of the year from his said entry into the order; that at the end of the year the guardian caused him, then in or about his twelfth year, to be called before him and urged him to make his regular profession, which he would not do, expressly protesting that he would profess neither the friars Minors' nor any other religion, and repeating his request to be allowed to return to the world; that the guardian again refused and threatened him with formidable punishments [*cruciatibus*] if he did not remain in the order, caused him to be kept more diligently, and strove by threats and terrors to extort by some means or other his said profession; that he handed the profession, written in Latin, to Henry to read, who did not then understand it and had not yet been instructed in the rule, and compelled him to read it; that the guardian and friars, cunningly assuming that he had thereby made his profession, subsequently, when in his fifteenth year, by formidable threats of prison and corporal punishment and various other penalties, compelled him to take the order of subdeacon and to occasionally minister therein, but he then and subsequently, as often as he dared, protested that he would not remain in the said religion and subdiaconate but seize an opportunity to return to the world, as he had before protested; and that he did so escape and never afterwards ministered in his subdeacon's orders. Pope Alexander ordered the above bishop, if he found the aforesaid to be true, to declare that it had been lawful for Henry to thus return to the world, and that he could contract marriage; but before the bishop proceeded to execution Pope Alexander died."

## 14

(Chapter XIV, p. 200, and xv, p. 222)

## A RECENT CRITIC ON ODO

An article on Odo has come to my notice at the last moment of preparation for the press (*Ch. Quart. Rev.* Oct. 1925, by Prof. Claude Jenkins). It takes us some steps farther in certain respects, and is specially valuable for the minute care with which the author works out (what had been already indicated more briefly by previous students) Odo's conclusive evidence as to the small amount of writing done in the Norman monasteries, and the comparative scarcity of books. Prof. Jenkins has also worked more exhaustively than any predecessor at the statistics of clerical and monastic delinquents; but here, though his labours will be of real assistance to others, his conclusions would seem to need considerable revision.

In the first place, he writes as if Odo were our only contemporary witness on this point, and therefore the only source from which any modern professor can estimate, *tant bien que mal*, the real state of things among secular and monastic clergy. Thus, having calculated for himself that there were about 200 black sheep in 1117 cures in the course of over 21 years, he would seem to imply that there is nothing very unsatisfactory in this state of things. These statistics, on the purely numerical side, may be taken as valuable and accurate; but, when he treats them as exhaustive, he ignores a great many plain indications in the Register itself, and comes into conflict with unexceptionable contemporary witnesses. St Bonaventura was Odo's exact contemporary, friend, fellow-Franciscan and fellow-professor at Paris. He therefore knew the Norman clergy, at least by reputation, a great deal better than any modern student can profess to know them; and his *Quare Fratres Minores Praedicient* was addressed mainly to a Parisian public. In that treatise, enumerating the defects of unsatisfactory clerics, he describes them as (1) excommunicate or *irregulares*, or (2) ignorant, or blabbers of confessions, or soliciting their flock to sin in confession, or (3) negligent, or (4) null; that is, holding their livings in violation of Church law, and therefore with no real ecclesiastical authority over their flocks. He then tells us that, "nowadays, there are few indeed among the clergy who are spotted with none of these stains"—*satis rari sunt in clero jam, quos nulla praedictarum respergat macularum*—a sentence which, even if we neglect the common medieval sense of *satis*, and translate merely "rather few," and again, when we have made all allowance for medieval vehemence of language, still implies a terrible condemnation. Moreover, in a slightly earlier passage he has gone to the root of the real difficulty; "there is scarce any hope of correction; for, if men ever wanted to correct these things and remove the unprofitable [clerics], they have none better to set in these men's places." Other contemporaries, such as St Thomas Aquinas, Cardinals Hugues de St-Cher and Humbert de Romans, judge in much the same sense. And I think there are two very simple reasons why those eye-witnesses thought worse of the Church in which they lived, than this modern critic who undertakes to judge it from his own impressions of Odo's Register: *viz.* that Prof. Jenkins does not realize the exact meaning of certain technical terms, and that the diligence which he has shown in minor details has not been backed up by a proportionately exhaustive study of more important matters which are constantly revealed by this remarkable book.

Two examples may suffice. "The Register," he writes on p. 104, "does not afford information to enable us to distinguish in all cases the variations between suspicion, 'defamation' and proven guilt." And his corroborative footnote runs: "At Buieval a priest is removed 'licet contra eum nichil probabile invenissemus.'" The reference is to p. 268 of the Register, which runs in full: "We removed from this convent [of Bival] the [nuns'] priest, because of the scandal of the nuns and the people, although we had found nothing we could prove—

*nichil probabile*—against him. Florence had given birth there to another child; and the whole convent was defamed on that account.” But nine years after (p. 523): “We ordered that a certain priest-brother of their house [the convent of Bival], who had long ago been removed from the convent not without cause [*ex causa*], should be recalled, intending that the house should be relieved of the annual pension which he received therefrom; whereat indeed many [of the nuns] murmured and were in great grief, saying and affirming that he was worse than he had ever been, wherefore they shrank not a little from his return and conversation. So afterwards, at the abbess’s prayer and instant supplication, we desisted from this recall, wishing that the man should be left outside as before, lest worse should happen.” This makes the matter clear enough: and most of the obscurity of which Prof. Jenkins complains seems due to his own imperfect grasp of the real legal significance of *diffamatio* and *purgatio*. Again, the case which he quotes on p. 89 does not support the inference which he seems to draw from it; not only was this particular vicar incontinent (which might have been dealt with quietly, as in the Pontoise case quoted in my text), but he was also *diffamatus*—i.e. his incontinence was a matter of public notoriety; of this Odo proceeds to record startling instances; the man had guilty relations with three women; one of them he had “foully buffeted,” another, “whom he had kept in his chamber, had stolen therefrom a cloak which she threw out of the window into the street, handing it over to a certain other harlot her companion” (p. 535).

It is equally misleading to describe Odo’s not infrequent remark “it displeased us very much” as “one of the *clichés* of the Register,” thereby implying that the archbishop had no serious reasons for the displeasure which he thus records. The case by which Prof. Jenkins tries to support this view (p. 107) is one which would certainly displease any right-minded archbishop or layman of today; and, if Odo so often wrote himself down as displeased, this was because he found so many and such serious causes for displeasure.

Prof. Jenkins seems, again, not quite familiar with certain fundamental questions of monastic visitation. It is easy, from a modern easy-chair, to criticize Odo for his stress on certain points of discipline; but is it not an anachronism? It is not made plain enough on pp. 108–9 that what is there described as Odo’s “gibes” at monastic flesh-eaters is not only a repetition (by implication) of one of the most emphatic clauses of the Benedictine Rule, but would have been echoed certainly by the overwhelming majority, and probably by all without exception, of serious writers on monastic discipline in any century or any country of the Middle Ages. Again, Prof. Jenkins writes that “the abnegation of private property was of the essence of the ‘religious’ life as he [Odo] conceived it, and no one could doubt that the Rule and Statutes were on his side. But how was he to ensure that the rule of poverty as he interpreted it was being obeyed by monk or canon or nun?” Yet, when he twice inserted those limitations I have italicized, he cannot have realized the actual details of canon law, more important in this

connexion than even Rule and Statutes. In 1234, when Odo himself was probably studying or teaching at Paris, Gregory IX had published his famous collection of Decretals, and sent it to the law-university of Bologna with a bull commanding "that no man use any other compilation than this in the Lawcourts and in the Schools." In this compilation, besides the repetition of an earlier decree that any Religious found in possession of private property should be buried in the dunghill, in sign of the damnation of his soul, Gregory incorporated a sentence of Innocent III: "Nor let an abbot imagine that he may grant any monk a dispensation for private property; since the abdication of property, like the keeping of chastity, is so bound up with the monastic Rule that not even the Supreme Pontiff can grant a licence in abdication thereof" (*Decret. Greg. I. III, tit. xxxv, c. 6*). This, then, was one of the most recent and emphatic laws of that Church of which Odo was a very responsible executive officer; and it is high time that the conduct of men in the thirteenth century should be judged, not according to the standards natural to the modern academic mind, whether Anglican or anti-Anglican, but according to the documentary records of their own age. I feel confident that any student who reads carefully through Odo's diary, and takes full account of what may easily be learned from other sources concerning the conditions of the time, will rather wonder at this visitor's moderation than patronize him as an honest but fidgety person who had not the tact to overlook things which modern disciplinarians, accustomed to an entirely different world, may more safely ignore or pardon. All the considerations here assembled on pp. 109-10 of *The Church Quarterly* to show how human it was for Religious to violate Rule and Statutes on this point, are historically as anachronistic as they are natural to a kindly and apologetic clerical mind of the twentieth century; and the same may be said of the apology for flesh-eating. These excuses are practically identical with those which the decadent Religious of the later Middle Ages urged in their own defence, and which orthodox reformers like Trithemius and Gui Jouennaux and Dionysius Carthusianus swept away with indignant scorn. Medieval disciplinarians assure us, in so many words, that when monks are allowed private property, they will almost certainly proceed to violate the other two "substantials" of obedience and chastity. Equally anachronistic are Prof. Jenkins's objections to the rule of accusation between monk and monk in daily chapter. Almost everywhere in medieval life, it may be said, discipline depended upon tale-bearing; there were even pupils at school and university whose emoluments depended upon their punctual fulfilment of this obligation; and, though doubtless the *moine moyen sensuel* strongly objected to being informed against, it is a mistake to imagine that the average good monk had any strong dose of the modern prejudice against playing the part of informer. When the Professor writes "*to Odo Rigaldi it seemed a wholesome exercise*" (italics mine), the limitation here implied is as misleading as it would be to say, "To Odo Rigaldi it seemed that he himself was living not in the twentieth century, but in the century of



Aquinas and Bonaventura." He not only *seemed*, but *was* living in the century of Aquinas, and equally of course he looked upon tale-bearing as a wholesome exercise.

Moreover, the writer has rather thoughtlessly emphasized these misleading suggestions by giving all his numerous references in terms of folios of the original manuscript, though it seems obvious that he is really quoting, like the rest of us, from Bonnin's text, and that he knows the foliation only as Bonnin gives it in the margin. This not only causes an unnecessary waste of time to readers who wish to verify his references, but suggests, however unintentionally, a deeper familiarity with the book and its contents than even his painstaking analysis of the statistics would really warrant. Beyond these statistics, he seems scarcely to have risen to the height of his subject. For, apart from the great Léopold Delisle, this book had already attracted the eager attention of Cotter Morison and of Michelet, writers with whom we may not agree but whom it is certainly not wise to ignore. It was this Register, in fact, which, with the St-Bertin records, played the main part in Michelet's later conversion to a far less favourable view of medieval society.

## 15

(Chapter XVI, p. 236)

### VISITATION ARTICLES

The following articles are, as the annalist tells us, modelled on those which Grosseteste drew up for his visitation, in 1237 or 1238. For their historical significance see A. L. Smith, *Church and State in the Middle Ages*, p. 24. The original is in *Ann. Monastici*, R.S. vol. 1, p. 484.

#### *"These are the Articles of Enquiry in Religious Houses"*

"(1) Whether all are regularly obedient to their superiors, and unanimous. (2) Whether there be schisms among them. (3) Whether they keep due silence. (4) Whether, in their talkings [*parliamentis*] other than holy and honest things be said. (5) Whether any have private property. (6) Whether they wander without leave, and quit the cloister without reasonable cause; whether they have leave [to go abroad] from any but the abbot, or, in his absence, from the prior. (7) Whether any aspire to have management of an estate [*ad ballivam habendam*]. (8) Whether the officials are prudent and faithful. (9) Whether they eat flesh, except in cases allowed by the Rule. (10) Whether they are abstinent and temperate. (11) Whether they eat separately in chambers, and have licence to do so. (12) Whether hale folk eat in the infirmary. (13) Whether the remnants go wholly to alms and into the hands of the almoner, and thence wholly into

the hands of the poor, no allowance of food being subtracted except the food-allowance of the almonry servants. Food may be given to strolling players [*histrionibus*] for their poverty's sake, but not as unto players; nor let their sports be seen or heard or permitted to be played before the abbot or the monks. (14) Whether any monk work for himself, and not for the community. (15) Whether any be a murmurer against his own correction, or that of the state of the house, or that of the observance of the Rule. (16) Whether accounts be rendered according to the statutes of the council and of the lord Pope. (17) Whether the monks grieve their tenants with tallages, or other unjust and grievous exactions. (18) Whether certain confessors be chosen, discreet men and more than one in number. (19) Whether the abbot's servants, or those of the obedientiaries<sup>1</sup>, be honest in dress and bearing, not proud nor drunken nor lecherous or defiled with other grievous sins. (20) Whether any extol himself proudly above his fellow-monks, or scorn them, seeing that each ought to think himself last of all. (21) Whether secular folk be kept away from the cloister, refectory, infirmary and choir, except persons of quality, or on feast-days at procession-time. (22) Whether the monks drink after compline, unless some evident cause, in accordance with the Rule, compel them thereunto. (23) Whether the statutes of the Council of Oxford concerning Religious, and those of Chapters General and of Episcopal Visitors, be read more than once a year in Chapter. (24) Whether any be admitted by simony. (25) Whether the precincts [*curia*] be well enclosed on every side. (26) Whether the revenues and income of the house, and all its goods and belongings, be set down in writing, so that the seniors of the convent, and the Visitors on their visits, may see clearly the state of the house. (27) Whether the abbot, when the business of the house taketh him not abroad, be often in the cloister, and regularly in Chapter to correct offences; and whether he eat in the Refectory except when hindered by guests or some other regular cause. (28) Whether all except the sick rise to matins, and remain in choir until the end of that service. (29) Whether, when the monks' friends come to visit them, kindly ministrations of food and drink be made unto them from the cellar and the kitchen. (30) How the convent seal is kept, and under how many locks. (31) Whether the receivers of the house render accounts, and how often yearly. (32) Do the monks give their old clothes to whom they will, or are these given to the poor? (33) Of the washing of clothes. (34) Whether the infirmary be rightly and regularly provided. (35) Whether any monk sends letters or receives gifts. (36) Whether they have coverings of burnet<sup>2</sup>, or fur of wild beasts<sup>3</sup>. (37) Whether they eat and drink uniformly in the refectory. (38) Whether any, except the obedientiaries, have locked closets. (39) Whether any of the revenues assigned to infirmary, guesten-hall, or almonry, be subtracted and converted to other uses. (40) Whether any obedientiary or other monk maketh a

<sup>1</sup> Conventual officers.

<sup>2</sup> A fine and expensive cloth.

<sup>3</sup> As opposed to lambskin, etc.

feast to the other monks on any holy-day or for any other occasion<sup>1</sup>. (41) Whether hospitality be duly kept. (42) Whether any monk talketh alone with women, or without two or three witnesses who can hear every word. (43) Whether they have round-pointed shoes, according to the Rule. (44) Whether any have a herb garden of his own, or pet birds, puppies, chickens, geese, eggs<sup>2</sup>, and so forth. (45) Whether any alienation or gift from the chamber be made, or any selling or giving of corrodies. (46) Whether any women dwell within the precincts. (47) Concerning the hospitality outside the gate. (48) Concerning the supporting of kinsfolk. (49) Whether any be too familiar with any other. (50) Whether any preach in the convent. (51) Whether they work at gathering sheaves, fruit or hay in the presence of secular folk. (52) Whether they have made a conspiracy against the bishop's coming [to visit]. (53) Whether any loan have been contracted; by whom and for what reasons; and to what uses it hath been turned. (54) Whether the gates be well closed at night. (55) Whether they receive money for annuals or triennials. (56) Whether any professed monk have run away from the house."

## 16

(Chapter XVI, p. 238)

## DIFFAMATIO

A. (From Herder's *Kirchenlexikon*, vol. III,  
col. 1750, Freiburg i/B. 1884)

"*Diffamatio* (in a stronger form, *infamatio*) is the expressed public opinion—*öffentlich verbreitete Meinung*—of the supposed delinquency of a specified person. Wherever, according to Canon Law, no public accuser came forward, and therefore no exact accusatorial trial took place, then a criminal enquiry could only be set on foot on the immediate ground of such a *diffamatio* (c. 24, x, *de accusat.* 5, 1; c. 31, x, *de simon.* 5, 3). But on every occasion the judge was bound first to make sure that, in this particular case, the *diffamatio* had in fact sufficient foundation. This preliminary enquiry was called *inquisitio famae* (c. 14, x, *de accus.* 5, 1). Therefore the suspected person could, from the first, contest the existence of such an evil report, and thus contest the foundation of such an enquiry (c. 19, x, *eod.*; Sext. c. 1, 2, *eod.* 5, 1). For a sufficient *diffamatio*, it was not sufficient that anyone should show merely a secret or anonymous bill of accusation, nor again could the superficial judgement of two or three persons suffice; but the report must be an actual open and widespread *fama*, supported by repeated evidence of unprejudiced and trustworthy witnesses. On

<sup>1</sup> E.g. the commemoration-day of some benefactor.

<sup>2</sup> Contrary to the Benedictine prohibition of private property; cf. Odo Rigaldi, p. 550, and the 10th of my *Medieval Studies*, p. 23, n. 21.

the other hand, however, it was not always necessary that a public *infamatio* should exist; but the judge must at least have received some special and trustworthy denunciation before proceeding to an enquiry (c. 14, 19, x, *eod.*). Then the points of ill-fame (*capitula infamationis*) were laid before the person inculpated, and the names and evidence of the witnesses heard against him were communicated, in order to enable him to defend himself against what was brought forward, and to take exception to the competence or personal credibility of the witnesses (c. 21, 24, 26, x, *eod.*). If the enquiry gave no decisive result, then the object of the enquiry was called upon to purge himself by oath, in order to wipe out even the stain of suspicion."

For the distinction between "slight suspicion" and *diffamatio*, see Hinschius, *Kirchenrecht*, vol. v (1895), pp. 486-7. Two concrete examples, quite typical of what may be found almost anywhere in medieval records, may help to make the matter clearer (Salter, *Aug. Chap.* pp. 89, 111). In 1443, the English provincial visitors "notified [to the Chapter] by word of mouth that a certain canon of Ixworth, named &c. [*sic*] has committed many enormous offences, and has been condemned after a formal trial held by the bishop of Norwich, concerning which offences there is also such a public report and fame that it can be no longer tolerated without scandal to the Order"; the brother is therefore to be imprisoned at Oseney at the expense of Ixworth. Here we see the full force of the word *fama*, underlying the legal notion of *diffamatio*. On the other hand, at the Chapter of 1446, "The prior of Kenilworth, one of the visitors, brought forward by word of mouth certain sinister things concerning the prior of Repingdon, in his district, which, as he asserted, he and his colleague heard in the exercise of their visitation. And, because it seemed both to the speaker himself and to his colleague and to the diffinitors that these utterances had probably come from malevolent authors, and rather from surmise than from truth, therefore the diffinitors preferred to ignore it in silence and wink at it altogether." That was a case of *levis suspicio*.

## B. Visitatorial Procedure in 1628

There is, I believe, no medieval book of monastic law approaching to the fulness of A. Tamburini's *De Jure Abbatum*; the author was a Vallombrosan abbot, and counsellor to the Grand Duke of Tuscany. He lays it down very definitely that, apart from the ordinary periodical visitations, the superior must not proceed to an enquiry "unless there be some accuser or denunciator or exceptor, or precedent *infamia*." "This principle is based not only on common law but also on divine: as is proved from that text in Genesis (iv, 10), *The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground*; whence it is plain that God did not proceed to Cain's condemnation without a denouncing or accusing voice. Again, from Matthew xviii, 32, where the householder did not call the ungrateful servant avaricious and cruel until his ingratitude,

avarice and cruelty had been denounced to him by his fellow-servants. . . . Christ knew Judas to be a thief; but, because he was not accused, he was not cast out. Again, in John viii, 3, the lord Jesus Christ said to the adulterous woman, *Where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? . . . neither do I condemn thee.* Again, that there must be precedent *infamia* is proved by Genesis xviii, 20: *The cry of Sodom hath come unto me, I will go down and see, etc.* Behold how *infamia* preceded judgement." He goes on to explain that "the subjects [*i.e.* the visitands] are not bound when interrogated by the judge, or when compelled by censures at a general enquiry, to reveal anything hidden, but only those things whose doers are under *infamia* for such a misdeed. . . . Even as the judge may not enquire concerning hidden things, so the person interrogated ought not to reveal hidden things, nay, not even though it be laid upon him under oath, or under pain of excommunication or other censures, and the command to reveal the truth be laid upon him, even so he may deny that he knows anything, understanding tacitly that he does not know it in such a way as to be bound to reveal it; for he has the right of using equivocation, and understanding the oath he has taken with the internal restriction which excludes the present case. . . . Lessius adds that, when the misdeed is so hidden that it cannot by any means be proved, then it is a plain sin against justice to disclose it; since, not being capable of proof, it cannot be punished either; therefore nothing could follow from its disclosure but *infamia*." Yet these considerations must be set aside if concealment cause harm to other persons; or, again, if disclosure be to the profit and amendment of the culprit. "From the foregoing it may be deduced that, if the person interrogated in a general enquiry is not bound to disclose a culprit, while there has been no preceding *infamia* and the wrongdoer is hidden, then still less will he be bound to reveal himself or his accomplice, except with this limitation, that either precedent *infamia* exists, or some half-complete proof." He then gives a formula for the usual general enquiry at a monastery; there is no oath exacted; but the superior "warns him to tell the truth in answer to the questions, even as he hath promised to do."

As to *infamia*, which alone can justify a special examination of a particular person, as distinguished from this general enquiry, "it is required that the rumour concerning him be spread abroad over the greater part of the neighbourhood, or college, or university or monastery where the delinquent lives. . . . and there must be at least ten residents in the said neighbourhood, college, university or monastery. . . . It should be proved by at least two lawful and sworn witnesses, who shall depose that this is publicly reported, or that they have heard it publicly said, and especially by such and such persons, naming them; and these named persons ought also to be examined and questioned." But a conventual visitor has a right to institute a special enquiry against an individual if he can say "that it has come to our ears, by precedent *fama*, or by outspoken assertions published not once but repeatedly, and not by ill-disposed or evil-speaking persons, but by

honest and upright folk"<sup>1</sup>. And, if the case be specially grave, the visitor will put the chief witnesses upon their oath (p. 456, §§ 7, 9).

This disquisition bears evident marks of seventeenth-century casuistry; but there is no point, I think, upon which these lenient prescriptions may not be justified by some medieval precedent; and we may at least see how little even the Counter-Reformation was able to aim at that strictness of enquiry which had been contemplated, though perhaps seldom practised, in the great years of monasticism from 1150 to 1250.

## 17

(Chapter xvii, p. 239; see also the closing paragraph of Appendix 1)

## GENERAL REFERENCES FOR EVIDENTIAL VALUES

A good many of my points are supported by Schmieder's monograph; see especially pp. 11, 16, 18, 27, 42, 46, 52, 55, 57.

The second volume of C. L. Richard's *Analysis Conciliorum* will show how frequently these problems engaged the attention of Church synods; e.g. pp. 21, 25, 48, 78, 118, 139, 140, 141, 169, 238, 240, 243, 248, 260, 261, 267, 269, 279, 302, 318, 322, 331, 340, 344, 422, 468, 469, 470, 471, 474, 478, 486, 496. D. Wilkins's *Concilia* supplies frequent evidence as to the difficulties of carrying out the visitational ideal: e.g. vol. I, pp. 547, 640, 649, 676, 682, 734, 735; vol. II, pp. 60, 217, 327, 455, 547, 578, 678, 699, 700, 702, 703, 707, 746; vol. III, pp. 18, 363, 504, 569, 579, 586, 599, 601, 602, 605, 665, 676, 723. So also the following volumes of the *Camden Society*, easily accessible to students: *Vis. Dioc. Norwich*, pp. xix, 5, 7, 22, 26, 58, 72, 96, 99, 100, 105, 107, 108, 111, 114-22, 124, 125, 126, 135, 138, 143, 150, 155, 158, 170, 171, 197, 198, 203, 205, 245, 265, 268, 290, 307, 314; *Collect. Anglo-Premonst.* vol. I, pp. 29, 85, 92, 182; vol. II, pp. xv, 26, 35, 43, 46, 54, 56, 61, 78, 89, 97, 108, 116, 124, 127, 136, 140, 141, 161, 174, 182, 184, 186, 204, 221, 222, 236, 252; vol. III, pp. 9, 24, 32, 38, 46, 58, 63, 67, 80, 87, 96, 98, 103, 105, 107, 115, 116, 122, 130, 140, 143, 151, 158, 160, 162, 165, 179-81, 184, 192, 199, 216, 219, 220. To these may be added T. Gascoigne, *Loc. e. Lib. Verit.* pp. 32, 34-6, 43, 65; Nicolas de Clémanges, discussing this question of visitation in the early fifteenth century, quotes the proverb that human laws are like spiders' webs; they catch flies and small insects, but are powerless against greater trespassers (*Opera*, p. 146 a).

<sup>1</sup> Vol. III, pp. 451-7. This edition (3rd) is dated 1650; but the specimen documents are dated 1628. According to Jöcher, there were two later editions after the author's death. This particular section is entitled *Praxis criminalis Abbatum*, quaest. 5-8.

## 18

(Chapter xvii, p. 247)

## THE EXEMPTION SYSTEM

A very valuable conspectus of the exemption system, from the earliest times to the Council of Trent, has been written by a German priest, Dr A. Hüfner (*Das Rechtsinstitut der klösterlichen Exemption*, u.s.w. Mainz, 1907). The earliest example of a monastery thus withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop was Bobbio in 628. A few others followed in that century; the practice gradually became more frequent; then, at the end of the eleventh century, whole congregations began to receive exemption. Cluny itself had been exempt for some time, but now Urban II exempted the whole Cluniac Order (1088, 1097), and, a few years later, that of Vallombrosa (1090). St Bernard repudiated the privilege for his Cistercians, yet within a generation of his death these also were exempt; so also the Premonstratensians, then all four Orders of friars, and, roughly, every new Order founded after 1200. It is thus possible for Hüfner to write that exemption, from being exceptional, became the rule.

An excellent brief summary of early exemptions may be found in *Mill. Cluny*, vol. 1, pp. 247 ff. (article by Letonnelier); the author omits Bobbio, and counts Fulda (751) and Romainmotier (753) as the first:

For the practical working of the system I have the following references (not in chronological order). *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. II, p. 121 (cf. *Rot. Parl.* vol. III, pp. 468, 594); H. Pez, *Thes.* 1721, vol. I, ii, pp. 39 and 375 ff.; E. Martène, *Thes.* vol. IV, col. 1255, § 6; J. Raulin, *Sermones Quadragesimales*, Venice, 1575, p. 452 d; H. Pez, *Scriptt. Rer. Austriae*, II, 1725, p. 638 c; Ehrle in A.L.K.G. (1888), p. 394; cf. p. 440; *Gloucester Cartulary*, R.S. vol. 1, pp. 140 ff.; J. Gerson, *Opera*, Paris, 1606, II, 442 e; Ch. Taiée, *Étude sur l'Abbaye de Prémontré* (Laon, 1872), 1st part, p. 52; V. H. Galbraith, *The Abbey of St Albans*, Oxford, 1911, pp. 52-3; Steph. Tornacensis in P.L. vol. 211, coll. 350, 519, 555; Durandus, pars I, tit. v; Stubbs in pref. to *Epp. Cant.* R.S. pp. xxvi ff.; Berlière, *Honorius*, p. 477; Stevenson's *Grosseteste*, p. 154; *Ann. Mon.* R.S. vol. III, pp. 152, 178; Pecham's *Reg. Epp.* R.S. pp. 561-2, 677; Van Espen, vol. 1, pp. 1143 ff. (pars III, tit. xii, cap. 4); Gess, p. 25; Giraldus Cambrensis, *De Nugis*, C.S. p. 50. Such exemptions, says Pecham, help the exempt themselves on the way to damnation, and are perhaps even perilous to the souls of those who grant them (*Epp.* p. 677); *Hist. Cart. Glouc.* R.S. vol. 1, p. 52; vol. III, p. vii; Busch, pp. 563, 643, 760; Dugdale-Caley, vol. V, p. 464, § 5; Galbraith, p. 52; C. St Germain, *Spiritualtie and Temporalitie*, ch. ii, f. 8 b; Finke, vol. 1, p. 135, § 10; v. d. Hardt, vol. 1, pars x, p. 620. Marleberge, in his eagerness to secure exemption for his own Evesham,

pleads that this would result in better discipline under papal than under ordinary visitatorial authority; but it would be difficult to find any unbiased medieval writer supporting such a plea (*Chron. Evesh.* R.S. p. 201, an. 1206). Monasticism, wrote Richard Ullerston in the petition which he drew up for the coming Council of Pisa in 1408, has simply been turned upside down by privileges, dispensations and exemptions; experience has shown that exemptions have brought no profit to the Church in general, but very great damage<sup>1</sup>. Yet, naturally enough, monasteries were ready to go all lengths to secure exemption; a notorious example is the bull of Pope Agatho which the monks of Peterborough forged for this purpose. Exemptions are bought, writes a churchman of about 1415, in order to obtain immunity for sin (Brown, *Fascic.* vol. II, p. 564; the treatise is often, but wrongly, ascribed to Nicolas de Clémanges). The suggestion that exemption might have been purchased as a purely economic gain is exploded by Snape, *l.c.* p. 102.

## 19

(Chapter xvii, p. 251)

## VISITATION AND MONEY

Here is the rest of Ruysbroeck's description, from Surius's rendering: "Archpriests also, who are called Rural Deans, visit their parishioners and clergy; but we see by daily experience how much amendment of life follows. They have also another custom, that they yearly visit each parish and enquire into grievous public sins, and fine those whom they find guilty; this is the penalty and satisfaction for sin; when this has been paid, they can be safe and secure, and serve the devil for all that year, until the next visitation comes round. Nor are they spared; nay, they must pay the fine, even though it reduce them to beggary. If they are wealthy, with great revenues or incomings, they must needs give much, and the most that can be wrung from them. When they have paid this, they have a year's fresh freedom, until at last the devils tear their soul from their body and plunge it into hell, to suffer fines and penalties without end. Thus each hath his will; the devil the soul, the bishop his money, and these foolish wretched men a momentary pleasure. Such are the revenues whereby the bishop and his household are sustained; I say this with excuses to the good bishops. For there are some holy and kindly bishops, albeit their vicars-general or officials or servants are sometimes cunning, treacherous, merciless, hard, and so avaricious that no man may get at them nor do aught with them unless he pay a certain fee... And this detestable plague is very contagious; it hath spread far and wide; it hath infected and defiled every Order of Religion and priesthood throughout the world."

<sup>1</sup> Hardt, vol. I col. 1157; cf. col. 1146.



The following Cistercian cases may be verified in Martène's and Winter's collections of General Chapter statutes; I give year and paragraph: 1221, 26; 1232, 13; 1233, 9; 1256, 1; 1276, 2; 1282, 1; 1288, 2; 1289, 2 (Winter, vol. III, p. 247, shows already a weakening of the prohibition); 1312, 2 (W. p. 260: "in many regions the fervour of regular observance is much relaxed," therefore choose visitors "who have God before their eyes, and shake their hands free of all suspicious gifts"); 1461, 7; 1484, 6. Also *Nomast. Cist.* pp. 374, 385, 479, 513; v. d. Hardt, vol. II, pp. 421, 525; Gess, p. 42; Denis, *Richelieu, etc.* p. 83; Salter, *Aug. Chapters*, p. 226; *Worcs. Lib. Alb.* p. xxxviii; *Analecta Gallicana*, vol. II, p. 165; *Mem. Bury St Edmunds*, R.S. p. 187; Nider, *De Ref. Rel.* p. 194; Lea, *Sac. Cel.* (1907), vol. I, pp. 309, 337, 340, 345-6, 352, 357, 380, 384, 411, 420; vol. II, pp. 2, 9, 12, 13, 18. For visitors using their power as an excuse for extortion, C.P.L. vol. v, p. 88, "received, against the canons, gifts from clergy and people of divers cities and dioceses of the realm undergoing visitation, and advised others to do the same"; cf. *ibid.* pp. 15, 324; *ibid.* vol. X, p. 353, "have hitherto extorted money on account of the said visitations" (A.D. 1447; the pope orders restoration, but *not twofold*, nor any hint of farther punishment); *Magna Vita S. Hugonis*, R.S. pp. 187-8; *Bac. Past.* f. 26 b; Durandus, pars III, tit. xxxvi, p. 311; *Eynsham Cartulary*, pp. lxxx, lxxxv; *Lay Folks' Cat.* E.E.T.S. pp. 49, 167 ff.; *Chron. Melsa*, R.S. vol. III, p. 150; Gerson, vol. I, pp. 208, 553; vol. II, pp. 632, 634, 641; Peetz, p. 125; Giraldus Cambrensis, R.S. vol. II, p. 249; Richard, vol. II, pp. 196, 279, 303, 307, 345, 367; Brown, *Fasc.* vol. II, pp. 561-2; Dacheux, p. 489. The dangers imported into the visitation system by financial considerations may be studied also in the following references: Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. I, p. 651, § 7, pp. 671, 690, 691; vol. II, pp. 299, 578, 699, 700; vol. III, pp. 240, 245, 351, 363, 578; *Monumenta Franciscana*, R.S. p. 65; *Hist. and Cart. Glouc.* R.S. vol. I, p. lxxxvi; Dugdale-Caley, vol. II, p. 28 b; *Chron. Evesham*, R.S. pp. 138-9; Gregory IX's Cluniac statutes of 1233 [or 1231] in J. du Breul's edition of Aimoin, 1603, p. 837, §§ 2, 5; C. St Germain, *Spiritualité and Temporalité*, ch. xiii (on account of these pecuniary temptations "there is a common opinion in manner universally risen among the people, that such visitations, after the manner as they are used, do little good, and rather increase vice than virtue"); Bourbon, *Anecdotes*, p. 420. A witness complains concerning the south of France that "the bishops, practising unaccustomed exactions from parish to parish, go round their dioceses for the sake of victuals and gain, and turn the procuration itself into a sort of blackmail"<sup>1</sup>.

The thirteenth-century Dominican, Frère Lorens, and his English translator the Canterbury monk of 1340, speak of "these great prelates that pill and rob their underlings by taking too heavy procurations, or by some unrighteous takings that they do in too many manners;

<sup>1</sup> "Ipsamque procuracionem in quendam vertunt redemptionem." Bouquet, *Recueil Hist. France*, t. XII, p. 450.

these be the wolves that devour the sheep"<sup>1</sup>. In spite of conciliar decrees, we find the abbot of Dore regularly claiming, beyond his procuration fees when he visited, a "guerdon" for his chaplain and each of his attendants<sup>2</sup>. Ruysbroeck's evidence on this subject is thus summarized by Ullmann: "In their visitations, they are accompanied with an escort of above forty horsemen and an immense train of servants; of which the expense is borne by others and not by them. Great feasts and pomps are appointed, and endless provisions of meat and drink required. Nothing at all is done to better the lives of the clergy and their subordinates. Only notorious crimes are inquired into. For these the offenders are subject to a pecuniary fine, which is proportioned to their wealth, and when that is paid, they are at liberty to serve the Devil for another year. In this way all obtain, each what he wants; the Devil the soul, the Bishop the money, and the unhappy and infatuated men a momentary gratification" (*Reformers before the Reformation*, 1855, vol. II, p. 53). A few years later, Gerson describes a similar state of things: "Visitors are oftener intent upon gain and pomp and destruction than upon edification" (*Opp.* vol. II, p. 641). At Mettingham College, in Suffolk, the accounts bear definite testimony to bribery. The accounts for 6 Ed. IV note the following payments to the bishop's officials on a visitation: "*Item*, to master John Bulman, to get his friendship, 3s. 4d. *Item*, to his clerk 1s. *Item*, to six of his—to wit, master John Selott's—servants, 6s. *Item*, to master Robert Jeppeswell, to get his friendship, 3s. 4d. *Item*, to master William Duffeld, official [to the archdeacon] of Sudbury, to get his friendship for not paying the nobles to our brethren, 13s. 4d."<sup>3</sup>. What could be done in this way by thoroughly unscrupulous visitors, may be seen in *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, vol. IX, p. 211 (1535), where one of Cromwell's tools is reported as blackmailing his visitands on an excessive scale. But much could be earned without the least transgression of the law. How important was the financial side of the cathedral monks' right of visitation during the vacancy of the see, may be gathered by a document of 1401 in C.P.L. vol. v, p. 369 (Norwich); and again from a record of 1535, in which the bishop of Exeter does all he can to minimize his yearly profits from this source (*Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, vol. IX, p. 235). It transpires also from the records of *sede vacante* visitations; here Worcester is typical. "During a vacancy of the see the Prior and Convent of Worcester were entitled to administer the Diocese and to take part of the profits thereby derived, under the terms of an agreement made in

<sup>1</sup> *Ayenbite of Inwit* (E.E.T.S. 1876), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ledger of Vale Royal*, p. 31. This is in 1329.

<sup>3</sup> I owe this information to Miss C. B. Firth, who has derived it from Add. MS. 33987 (Mettingham Coll. Acts), fol. 81 b. The brethren were procuring visitatorial release from some pecuniary obligation, *pro nobilibus confratrum non solvendis*, probably a pension of 6s. 8d. due to each brother by statute, but now scarcely to be paid amid the institution's pecuniary embarrassments, for which see *Vis. Dioc. Nor.* pp. 45, 186, 260, 317.

1260 between the Prior of Worcester and Archbishop Boniface, that on a vacancy of the See the Prior should collect the revenues, and keep one third, and pay the Archbishop two thirds... On the principle of making hay when the sun shone, the episcopal rights were often most rigidly enforced during the time the See was vacant"<sup>1</sup>. But perhaps the most conspicuous instance is in Archbishop Morton's register at Lambeth, where the scribe, recording his visitation in Worcestershire, soon tires of transcribing the really important matters, and writes down very little more than was useful for maintaining the archbishop's claim to visit and take procurations on any other similar occasion<sup>2</sup>. In 1466, the Premonstratensian visitations in Scotland seem to have been farmed out; the visitor paid 120 crowns a year to the abbot of Prémontré and took what he could in the way of procurations<sup>3</sup>.

Some of these cases do not refer directly to monastic visitations, but to visitations in general, or archidiaconal in particular. These, however, afford strong corroboration for the other evidence, since the arch-deacon's opportunities and temptations, though greater than those of other visitors, were greater only in degree. Pecham found rural deans who were farming out their fines (*Reg. Ep.* p. 193); again, in the diocese of St David's it is reported to him that sinners are regularly allowed to continue in sin so long as they pay tribute (*ibid.* p. 795). The legate Othobon had found a good deal of this in England (Wilkins, vol. II, p. 10); and John of Ayton, commenting on this, remarks that such men care more for gold than for God's sunshine, and are more greedy than the traitor Judas, who did at least cast down his ill-gotten gains and go and hang himself (p. 115).

## 20

(Chapter xvii, p. 255)

## NEGLECT OF VISITATION

Gerhoh v. Reichersberg in P.L. vol. 194, coll. 1278, 1285; Gerson, *Opp.* vol. I, pp. 209-10 (through this neglect of holding regular synods and councils, abuses are growing inveterate, "until at last, under the wicked fiction of 'custom' [these evils] are counted to be lawful"); cf. *ibid.* p. 641; Brown, *Fasc.* vol. II, p. 897 (abuses become inveterate through neglect of visitation); Berlière, *Honorius*, pp. 250, 252; Conc. Salzburg in Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.* an. 1274, §§ 1-15; *Hor. Sap.* p. 153;

<sup>1</sup> *Sede Vacante Register*, Worcs. Hist. Soc. 1893, preface to pt I, p. iv: cf. preface to pt II, p. xvi: "Such was the visitation contest the Prior of Worcester kept up both to maintain the dignity of his house and to increase his revenue," and the page references there given; also pp. 219-22.

<sup>2</sup> *Reg.* vol. I (1486), ff. 176 ff. The procurations and probates on this visitation brought in a gross sum of nearly £340, or about £5000 in present purchasing power.

<sup>3</sup> *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* vol. I, p. 240.

Berchorius, vol. IV, p. 28; Schmieder, pp. 16, 18, 27, 42, 46, 52, 55, 57; Tritheim, *Opp. Pia*, pp. 985-6, 1039, 1056; *Dehort.* pp. 263, 269; Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* p. 120. Very significant are the Benedictine General Chapter records of 1343, with their notes of the large proportion of visitations unaccomplished. Among ten visitors, two had died, but only one of the survivors seems to have performed all the visitations prescribed by the General Chapter of 1340 (Reynerus, App. III, p. 107); Grosseteste, *Epp.* R.S. p. xli; Dijon, liasse *Abbatess conjuncti*, letter of Walter A—— concerning fourteenth century Ireland; Salter, *Aug. Chap.* p. xliii: "It is doubtful if [the General Chapters of Aug. Canons] continued to meet for long in any country except England"; yet the records show clearly that even in England there was much neglect; see pp. 39, 54-5, 86, 110, 111; compare p. xxxiii as to their business inefficacy: "There was no discussion"; *Bullae Tres*, p. 18 (Nicholas IV: "spiritual and temporal mismanagement because the abbot [of Cluny] never visits the remote provinces").

## 21

(Chapter XVIII, p. 261)

## AVOIDANCE OF SCANDAL

Compare the statutes of 1583 for the nuns of Clarenberg: "If [a sister] have dealt unchastely, *and is found to be thus with child*," she is to lose her prebend (*Clarenberg*, p. 365). A minor canon of Southwell had stolen venison from the archbishop's park in 1498; his superiors punished him no farther than that they "enjoined upon him that, for a while, he should drop his [sacerdotal] habit, until the wrath and indignation of certain persons were appeased; and they commanded him not to repeat this offence" (Leach, *Southwell*, p. 62). Pecham's letters show many instances of the deliberate silence shown in my text; so do nearly all collections of visitors' reports. They ordinarily proceeded upon the principle enunciated at St Gallen; the brethren had reported some of their abbot's offences to the emperor, who had come as visitor, they added: "If these be not enough for his deposition, then there is worse, at present concealed, to be brought forward." Upon this the emperor, after due reflexion, decided that, if he threshed this whole matter out, it would waste interminable time; therefore he answered the brethren: "If it were granted to you publicly to proclaim the evil deeds of your abbot, more harm than good would result; for, if you reported any discreditable things concerning him, the honour and esteem of all monks would be tarnished, and the monasteries would become less profitable": therefore he advised them to come to an agreement out of court. The monks now saw no other hope, "albeit they saw no profit in these words," and although, even on the imperial council, some ministers murmured that this was a corrupt

decision<sup>1</sup>. There is a very significant letter of 1331 A.D., in which the prior of Canterbury cathedral requests that only the president of the Benedictine Chapter General may have "power to absolve their brethren if they fail in any of the three substantial of the Rule [*i.e.* poverty, chastity, and obedience] . . . and that your own penitentiaries may have their hands bound [in this matter]. This I write to you not without weighty cause" (*Litterae Cantuarienses*, R.S. 1887, vol. 1, p. 370). Everything must be done to prevent Benedictine failings from being known outside the Benedictine community: compare another Canterbury case in *Hist. MS. Com. Reports*, vol. ix, p. 96 a.

In all visitation records, one of the most serious offences contemplated is that of revealing the secrets of the chapter; see *e.g. Archiv*, vol. 1, p. 217 (Dominican; also difference of punishment for carnal lapses if committed *outside* the monastery: *ibid.* p. 209); Salter, p. 35 (Austin canons); Leach, *Southwell*, pp. 12, 21, 23, 73; Buonanoma, p. 9. Felix Hemmerlin, on the verge of the Reformation, emphasized this winking at offences as one of the crying evils of his day: "Praelatorum dissimulatio tam jugis est contra publicos subjectorum offensus" (*De nob.* c. 32, f. 128 b). To reveal the details of a visitation was one of the worst and most heavily-punished of monastic offences; cf. Salter, *Aug. Chap.* p. 35 (1259 A.D.; excommunication *ipso facto* for such offence). Cf. the injunction to visitors that they must jealously guard the *celanda* which they discover, Wadding, *Ann.* 1263, vol. iv, p. 513.

## 22

(Chapter xviii, p. 265)

### EVIDENCE ON OATH

A writer in *The Month* (Aug. 1921) accused a distinguished Anglican professor of ecclesiastical history of "making offensive charges against the Religious of pre-Reformation England with as little regard to evidence or fair-play as characterized the most bigoted and unscrupulous of their predecessors." The first instance he adduced was this; that the professor had disbelieved the testimony given by a certain community to their visitor; therefore this was tantamount to the assertion, "bearing in mind that *depositions at visitations were made on oath*, that the abbot and his 14 monks were *perjured* liars." The rest of this article criticized my use of the visitation records in terms which betrayed fatal unfamiliarity with the real character of these documents. I therefore wrote to request some sort of contemporary authority for the crucial assertions I have here italicized, and added that they were not consistent with such evidence as I had met with. This request for evidence, after the too common example of Roman Catholic historical

<sup>1</sup> Ekkehard, cap. III, pp. 68 b, 69 a.

writers, he altogether ignored, without, however, making the slightest apology for the railing accusation into which his own ignorance had betrayed him. Since this, Prof. A. Hamilton Thompson and Mr H. E. Salter have, on reflexion, intimated their general agreement with my main conclusion, that the oath was no part of *normal* visitation procedure. I must now give the more detailed evidence, so far as I have been able to collect it.

P. Fournier treats this subject on p. 277 of his valuable *Officialités au moyen âge*; but the reader would scarcely gather, and it is not quite plain whether he himself realized, that the procedure he there describes is exceptional. He follows Durandus's *Speculum*, written in 1271<sup>1</sup>, and notes (though without bringing out the full significance of the words) that the *inquisitio* there described by Durandus "takes for granted *infamia praecedens*." This means, that he is speaking only of such exceptional enquiries as were called for when a certain number of respectable and well-informed witnesses were already prepared to intimate their suspicion of grave wrongdoing at some particular monastery. In such cases, the monastery was already "defamed"; the burden of disproof was thrown upon its inmates; and it was natural that the visitor should have power to put them all upon oath. Durandus himself distinguishes this from the ordinary visitations of a bishop or archbishop, wherein, "though there is no pre-existing *infamia*, yet he may well make summary enquiry, step by step, without turmoil of justice" (vol. III, § 6, p. 30 a; cf. p. 31 b). He discusses the definition of *infamia* on p. 32 b, and on p. 35 a gives a model for enquiry and report; this instance is that of "the abbot and monks of San Procolo at Bologna, from whom we first took an oath as they were assembled in chapter; and at length, because this monastery had been almost irreparably ruined—*collapsum*—under this abbot, both spiritually and temporally, the abbot himself [after our enquiry] resigned of his own free will." It is plain from the first, therefore, that we cannot argue from this exceptional procedure which Durandus describes in detail, to the ordinary routine of visitation. Grube, in his analysis of the statutes of the reformed congregation of Windesheim (about 1390), puts the exceptional character of the oath very plainly: "Usually, it was enough to remind [the visitands] of the obedience they owed to the Order; but in graver cases the visitors might also put them upon oath"<sup>2</sup>. All the other evidence seems fully to bear out Trithem's judgement in my text, that the visitor may insist on an oath when he thinks fit, and that it might be well to insist upon it rather oftener, but that it formed no part of ordinary procedure. Otherwise we should almost inevitably find monks recorded here and there as excommunicated for perjury on an ordinary visitation; whereas both Prof. Hamilton Thompson and Mr H. E. Salter tell me that their experience

<sup>1</sup> The references are to lib. I, pt iv, § 7 and lib. III, pt i (by his misprint, iv), § 3. I refer to these as I and III, adding pages in vols. I or II respectively of the Frankfort edition, 1592.

<sup>2</sup> *Joh. Busch*, 1887, pref. p. xxxii.

resembles mine, and that they could not point offhand to a single such case<sup>1</sup>.

This brings us down from theory to practice. How far was this exaction of an oath exceptional?

From what Jocelin of Brakelond tells us in his earlier pages about the visitations of Bury, it seems plain that the monks were not sworn by the visitors there. Again, a case incorporated in canon law, and dating from about 1230, implies that the oath was not then a regular part of visitatorial proceedings in actual practice (*Decret. Greg.* lib. v, tit. i, c. 26). Gregory IX there accuses an abbot of having extorted from his monks an oath that they would conceal the truth from the visitor. The glossator points out that such concealment of the truth is a mortal sin—as, of course, every self-interested lie on an important point is. But neither he nor the pope implies that this concealment had involved actual perjury on the monks' part. Again, Gregory's letter which Matthew Paris gives under the year 1232, and in which he goes into many details of procedure, contains no hint of an oath; only *diligenter inquirant*. Moreover, in another decree on a very different subject, he strongly deprecates unnecessary recourse to the judicial oath, *ne auctor perjurii videaris* (*Decret. Greg.* lib. II, tit. xxiv, c. 34). About the same time, Grosseteste's attempt to put monastic witnesses upon oath was evidently resented, like other acts of his, as an unusual and unjustifiable severity. The canon of Dunstable writes: "In this same year [1240], one of our brethren, Walter of Gledelle, joined the monks of Woburn; his motive was, that the bishop of Lincoln [Grosseteste], when he visited us, extorted an oath from each of us." Grosseteste (*Ann. Monast.* R.S. vol. III, p. 152) bears explicit testimony to the visitor's difficulty of getting at the truth; though the occasion leads him here to speak only of the parish clergy, yet the conditions which he describes are equally applicable to monks; the witnesses do not shrink from perjury, and he cannot establish judicially facts which he knows to be true (*Epp.* R.S. p. 317). The implications of this letter fit in with the note of the Dunstable annalist; in requiring oaths, the bishop was bending the bow too far. We get another piece of contemporary evidence from the Franciscan Order, where men were accustomed then to far stricter discipline than in most convents of the older Orders. Thomas of Eccleston tells us of "Brother Wymund the German, a man most famous for his skill in law and conspicuous for the purity of his morals, and a most familiar friend of the lord cardinal Otho who was then legate in England. This man had received from [Elias], the minister-general, so strict and minute a form of visitation, and especially in that all should be excommunicate, *de facto*,

<sup>1</sup> Since writing this, I have noted one which I had often passed over without observing its significance (*Vis. Norwich*, p. 119). Brother Ringstead, in 1514, "fell into sentence of excommunication because he had concealed some of the aforesaid [faults] at the last visitation." But these faults, apparently, were such as *all* the brethren had concealed; it looks, therefore, as if Ringstead had been put specially upon oath.

who should in any wise conceal any matters from him, or who should reveal what had been said (from which excommunication no man but himself might absolve them; moreover, that he should report all the accusations to the minister-general), that there was such trouble among the brethren as had never been in the Order... Brother Arnulf, the papal penitentiary, said that, if the Devil had taken flesh, he would have invented no subtler and stronger snare to ensnare souls than was this visitation" (*Mon. Fra.* R.S. p. 29). A little later, Odo Rigaldi supplies similar evidence; he visited the nunnery of St-Saens in 1267 and "found Agnes and Joan liars and perjurers, when we had put some questions to them upon oath" (p. 598). This distinctly implies that the oath had been an extreme measure; so does p. 111 (St-Wandrille) where he finds that the abbot had "dissembled" a very grave fault of one of his monks, yet he makes here no accusation of perjury; cf. pp. 116, 118, 611; also Pecham, *Epp.* R.S. p. 608, where two brethren have concealed facts at a visitation, yet there is no question of perjury. The legatine visitors took an oath from the monks of St Emmeram at Regensburg in 1452; but this was under considerable stress; their preamble complains of general decay within the monasteries of that whole province, and their statutes banish women thenceforward from the precincts, with special mention of the choir, the apsidal chapels, and the conventual bath (*Codex Monacensis*, no. 14196, fol. 154 a; cf. fols. 159 a, 161 a). The chronicler Graystones records an archiepiscopal visitation of Durham monastery in about 1280; he is careful to detail the proceedings, since they would be valuable as precedents, and he notes that the archbishop "exacted no oath from any one, but he secretly repeated the same questions which he had publicly asked of them" (*Anglia Sacra*, vol. 1, 1691, p. 743). When Bishop Goldwell visited the monks of Norwich in 1492 they formally "took an oath of canonical obedience to the aforesaid reverend father, through the said prior, in his own name and in that of his brethren, all and several, monks of the said cathedral." The bishop then examined the monks "secretly and singly," but no oath is mentioned or implied. The same formalities were repeated at the next two visitations. When his successor Nicke visited, it was practically the same routine; "sentence of excommunication publicly was pronounced against any or all who should contentiously contravene in this chapter," but there is no hint of an oath taken by each witness at his examination<sup>1</sup>. Nor, again, so far as I have noted, is there any record of oaths as a normal formality in the Lincoln visitations, nor in any of the *Formae Visitandi* that I have seen. A Cluniac visitation of 1417 is recorded in minute detail; it seems clearly to exclude any oath (Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* pp. 129-30, 154); the visitor bade them tell the truth, and they "humbly answered" that they would. The Cistercian records (and it must be remembered how much the general system was modelled

<sup>1</sup> *Vis. Dioc. Nor.* pp. 2, 9, 11, 263. Others of Nicke's visitations are fragmentary, and yield no evidence either way.



upon Cistercian methods) are significantly silent wherever we should expect to find a mention of oaths (*Nomast. Cist.* pp. 219, 373-4, 427, 782); when a visitor means to depose an abbot, he is forbidden to exact from him an oath or obligatory letters of resignation (p. 427). Excommunication, again, is mentioned only twice, and that in connexion with lies or concealment as to money matters (pp. 431, 514). In the Cistercian *Modus Visitandi* of about 1400, the visitor is bidden warn the monks to tell the truth, but with no hint of oath (Winter, *Cist.* vol. III, p. 197). In Innocent IV's prescriptions the context seems definitely to exclude the oath (Wadding, *Ann.* 1219, § 47, ed. 1731, pp. 316-17). For similar evidence see Humbert de Romans in *Bib. Max.* vol. xxv, p. 543; Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* pp. 129, 168 (Hasingen and Iborch); Aube, 1906, p. 198; Salter, *Aug. Chap.* pp. 41, 48, 177, 211, 219-21, 231-2, 238-9; Cluni MSS. *Bib. Nat. Coll. de Bourgogne*, 82, § 354 (visits of Fontenella, St P. de Argono), and § 369 (Marmissa and Monsteretum); D. Royce, *Landbok of Winchcombe*, vol. I, p. xxv; Antonini, *Summa*, pars III, tit. xx, c. 6, § 2; Heywood and Wright, *Ancient Laws etc. of King's College and Eton*, 1850, p. 598; *Reg. Mayew*, pp. 27-33, 39, 113, 116, 144 (contrast with this silence, *Reg. Mayew*, p. 116, where the bishop's clerk carefully records oaths administered to witnesses in a case that has but little analogy with these monastic visitations); and compare the implications of the Lillechurch nun's "if I had been happy" given in my text, ch. xv.

Turning from this ordinary to exceptional procedure, we find that Symon of Bourges exacted an oath from the brethren of Cambronne because "he had been given to understand by certain monks of this convent that the prior was dissipating the temporal and spiritual goods of the abbey"—in short, because there was *infamia precedens* (Baluze, *Misc.* lib. IV, p. 276). At Tutela, however, even though he had heard reports of mismanagement, he only called together the chapter and "bade them tell him the truth" (p. 283). Bromyard's *Sum. Pred.* supplies similar evidence; "the judges of Religious *may—possunt—* put them to the question and excommunicate them unless they confess the truth" (*Visitatio*, § 45; while §§ 15-16 imply the absence of oath). So again in *Coll. Anglo-Prem.* vol. II, pp. 202-3, where there is strong *infamia precedens*, and a special commission is therefore appointed to examine the brethren on oath. So also in the Evesham case, presently to be noticed, again Innocent III in Migne, P.L. vol. 215, coll. 1587-8, and A. F. Leach, *Southwell*, where p. 68 shows an oath exacted in an extreme case, while pp. 2, 9 imply its usual absence. So, again, Bishop Redman, visiting at Beauchief in 1462, found the monastery "under manifold defamation of notorious crimes, by the frequent outcry [of the neighbourhood]"; and therefore he "put all and every brother of the said monastery under oath, with the stole over his head and his hand on the holy Gospels" (*Coll. Anglo-Prem.* vol. II, p. 48). It would be difficult to imply more distinctly that this was not his ordinary procedure. Moreover, if the oath had been usual, Alvarus Pelagius could scarcely have summed up the effect as he did; "visitation is

always an excusation and a veiling of sins" (f. 176 a). Johann Busch did indeed exact an oath from the sidesmen at the synod of Halle; but the fear of a sidesman to testify against his parson must have been extreme, and Busch shows, all through that story, that he is taking heroic measures to reform a society in which indiscipline had become habitual (*De Ref. Mon.* 1887, p. 441).

Again, the oath is definitely bound up with money questions in Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* p. 314; *Cart. St-Trond*, vol. 1, p. 512; Charrière, p. 613; P.L. vol. 216, col. 406 (Innocent III to St-Bénigne-de-Dijon); Sauvage, pp. 421-2, and Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, p. 238. Compare the statutes of Benedict XII in Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. 1, p. 602, where § 11 talks much of excommunication for fictive business contracts, and § 12 of the abbot's oath that he will not alienate the conventual possessions, yet in other places the pope is significantly silent. It may be worth while, in conclusion, to note that the contrast between a monk's view of the visitation of his own monastery, and the objective facts as they would have presented themselves to a good visitor, is well brought out in the case of St-Gall by G. Meyer v. Knonau (*Ekkehart's IV Casus S. Galli*, Leipzig, 1891, pp. xix-xxii).

Finally, we may judge how far to depend upon an oath, even under the most solemn circumstances, when inclination drew the other way, from Trithem's description of the result when Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa persuaded the Benedictine abbots to swear before him upon the high altar at Würzburg in 1451 (*Chron. Hirsau*, vol. II, p. 424).

## 23

(Chapter XVIII, p. 268)

### SILENCE OF THE RECORDS

Prof. Claude Jenkins has pointed out again quite recently<sup>1</sup> not only that things were often entered on the registers not so much for their intrinsic value as for their use in supplying models for future use by the scribes, but also that the medieval methods of compiling these registers, with a good deal of order and ingenuity, fell a good deal short of modern business methods, and led to occasional losses of important records. Pecham's letters show frequent instances of grave offences, suddenly discovered after long continuance; e.g. p. 574, and again p. 786, where he finds that a monk of Pembroke "has been incontinent all through the time [of his monastic life]"; and again p. 608, where two brethren of Hastings tardily confessed that, at his visitation, they had concealed many grave faults of their prior. Another unusually efficient prelate, Bishop Alnwick of Lincoln, had similar experiences through his visitors; see Power, *Numeries*, pp. 449, 458, 488-9, 491,

<sup>1</sup> *Ch. Quart. Rev.* Oct. 1924, pp. 86-7, 106; cf. *Tudor Studies*, pp. 50, 68, 70.

594; cf. p. 456, where the author points out that for Lincoln diocese "between the years 1290 and 1360...there are not many visitation records, and information has chiefly to be derived from episcopal mandates for the return of apostate [nuns], which leave us with little knowledge of the internal discipline of houses from which nuns did not happen to run away." The Carthusians, with all their exceptional strictness, were not always successful here. Dorlandus tells how a certain wicked prior led his community into all sorts of sins, "glutinous feasts and quarrels and fornication," yet who "so composed himself with feigned hypocrisy that no fault could be found with his morals," and, in the long run, it needed a very remarkable miracle from heaven to discover him (*Chron. Cart.* p. 481). Even Odo Rigaldi's injunctions sometimes give only a faint idea of the defects which he actually discovered (e.g. pp. 43-5); yet, in most cases, it is only the injunctions which have survived, the more detailed reports having been lost. Again, Odo's Register not infrequently betrays cases which have not been enregistered at all in their natural place, and of which we should have known nothing at all but for some casual later allusion (pp. 432, 434, 520, 532, 559). For farther evidence of this sort see *Reg. Brantyngham*, p. 273; and *Collect. Anglo-Prem.*, a collection which, under careful study, throws much light here; compare vol. II, p. 116 with p. 122, and follow up in vol. I, pp. 190, 200-2, 225; vol. II, pp. 26, 35, 43, 54, 56, 71 (*ut dicit*), 78, 97, 124, 127, 136, 140-1, 154, 161, 174-5, 182, 184, 186, 204, 221-2, 236, 252, 266; vol. III, pp. 9, 22-4, 32, 38, 46, 63, 67, 80, 87, 96, 98, 100, 103, 105, 107, 116, 122, 128, 130, 139-40, 151, 158, 160, 162, 165, 179, 184-5; all more or less clear indications that the whole truth was not elicited. See again *Reg. Bothe*, pp. 65, 128, 133; *Reg. Mayew*, p. 141; A. L. Smith, *Church and State*, etc. pp. 172-5; Marquiset, p. 159; Luchaire, *Social France*, p. 238; *From St Francis to Dante*, 2nd ed. p. 410, note 14; Jocelin of Brakelond, C.S. pp. 3, 54, 65-6, 87; Berlière, *Honorius*, p. 252; Duckett, *Charters*, etc. vol. II, p. 137 (Farley); Salter, *Aug. Chap.* pp. xxxv, xliii, 117, 128, 137. All this line of evidence is absolutely ignored by F. S. Stevenson (*Grosseteste*, p. 162), who assumes that the two serious disorders which happen to be recorded in that bishop's *Letters* are all that he ever discovered.

## 24

(Chapter XVIII, p. 272)

## CONSPIRACY AND COLLUSION

*Bibliotheca Cluniacensis* (ed. Marrier, 1614), p. 1575 (important: statutes of 1200 A.D.: "the mutual defence of the brethren, especially in cases of correction of delinquents," has become a scandal in the Order); *Reg. Alnwick*, p. lxxv (monks of Peterborough, 1446); Schmieder, p. 50; Salter, *Aug. Chap.* pp. xviii, xxii, xliii, 127; Bromyard, *Sum. Pred.*,

*Visitatio*, §§ 39, 42 (one of the visitor's three chief impediments is "the conglutination and conspiracy of wicked agreement or companionship...for these [sinners], when they can neither conceal nor palliate their guilt, defend themselves by wicked confederation," like Leviathan's scales); Prémontré, p. 140; *Flemyng*, p. 82; Duckett, *Visitations*, etc. p. 257; Fosbroke, p. 164; *Hist. Cart. Glouc.* R.S. vol. III, p. xxiv (four great monasteries conspire against the bishop's visitation about 1310 A.D.); Oefelius, p. 405 a (Reichenbach resisted reform by conspiracy, the criminal abbot spent 6000 florins of Church money on the lawsuit); *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* vol. II, pp. 49 (armed conspiracy in favour of guilty abbot), 110; Tritheim, *Opp. Pia*, pp. 992, 993; *Chron. Evesh.* R.S. pp. xxx, 121, 141, 149, 199, 201; *Yorks Arch. Journ.* vol. XI (1890), p. 127 (Cistercian statute of 1267; "the fame of the Order is enormously tarnished by the frequent wickednesses of conspirators," but without direct allusion to visitations); *Mél. arch. école franç. de Rome*, t. IV (1884), p. 44 (Benedictine statutes of 1220); Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. II, p. 612, § 39 (statutes of Benedict XII); F. Winter, *Prämonstratenser*, p. 271; M. Prou in *Mél. arch. école franç. de Rome*, t. IV (1884), p. 355; Migne, P.L. vol. 153, col. 1148, § 64 (Carthusian statutes of about 1300: "Whosoever have concealed from the visitors that which they ought to reveal to them, cannot be absolved by their priors except on a penance of seven continuous fasts...beyond the regular fasts"); *V.C.H. Oxford*, vol. II, p. 76.

[Mr G. R. Potter supplies the following valuable additional evidence. One of the questions argued by Gérard d'Abbeville before the University of Paris, between 1269 and 1272, was: "When a non-exempt abbot has wasted the goods of his monastery, and forbids his monks to reveal this to the visiting bishop, are those monks bound to obey their abbot?" (P. Glorieux, *La litt. quodlibétique*, 1925, p. 125.)]

## 25

(Chapter XIX, p. 278)

### PRIVATE REVENGE

*Codex Monacensis*, no. 14196, f. 161 b (legatine visitation of St Emmeram at Regensburg in 1452: "we strictly enjoin upon the lord abbot that he presume not to molest any of the brethren, by punishment or in any other way whatsoever, on account of the things reported to us by such brother"); Durandus, pars III, tit. xxiii, p. 270 (monastic superiors "ill-treat the monks who seek to accuse or denounce them"); Sparke, *Hist. Ang. Scriptt.* 1724, p. 121 (in 1278 the bishop deposed the abbot of Bardney; "but the abbot appealed to Robert, archbishop of Canterbury, and was restored to his former state; wherefore the prior, with other monks, was sent into dispersion. When two of these

returned afterwards to the monastery, the said abbot imprisoned them, and one died in this prison of hunger, thirst and starvation"); Pecham, *Epp.* R.S. pp. 55, 346, 373, 647, 661; Prémontré, p. 91; Loos, p. 68; *Marie de Bretagne*, pp. 37, 39; Berlière, *Honorius*, pp. 261, 473; Jocelin of Brakelond, C.S. pp. 54, 65, 66; Linneborn, p. 60; *Stud. Mitt.* 1882, p. 320; 1898, p. 595; 1899, pp. 485, 491; Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* pp. 222-3, 241, 256; Romeyn, vol. I, p. 261; vol. II, 318; *Nomast. Cist.* pp. 422, 534; *Cava*, p. 102; *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* vol. I, pp. 186, 196, 200, 238, 246; vol. II, pp. xvii, 203; vol. III, pp. 26, 69, 136, 215; Tritheim, *Opp. Pia*, pp. 997, 1031; *V.C.H. Oxford*, vol. II, p. 77; *Vis. Dioc. Norwich*, C.S. pp. 7, 203; *Bullae Tres*, p. 29 (Nicholas IV to the Cluniac Order: "we decree that the abbot of Cluny shall not presume to excommunicate, imprison or arrest any man who, for legitimate reasons, appeals for the good of the Order or of the abbey or of the priories"); *Yorks. Arch. Journ.* vol. X, p. 223 (Cistercians); vol. XI (1890), pp. 59, 83, 145 (Cistercian statutes of thirteenth century); Power, *Nunneries*, pp. 489 ff. (several cases); N. Valois, *G. d'Auvergne*, p. 99; Tritheim, *Ann. Hirsaug.* (1690), vol. II, pp. 351-2; Martène, *Thes.* vol. IV, ann. 1194, § 5, 1235, § 5; *Reg. Rad. de Salopia*, p. 90; Mabillon, *Ann. Bened.* vol. V, p. 87; vol. VI, p. 154; *Codex Dunensis*, p. 450; W. de G. Birch, *Ord. Vallis Caulium* (1900), p. 101; the Benedictine General Chapter statutes of 1444 in Reynerus, *App.* p. 134; J. du Breul, *Aimoin, etc.* p. 857 (cap. 2); Migne, P.L. vol. 153, col. 1146, § 18 (Carthusian statute of 1261 for imprisonment of those who "threaten death or fire"); *Flemyng*, pp. 121, 127; *Alnwick*, pp. 4, 44, 47, 49, 120, 122-3, 133, 143, 154, 162, 184; Dugdale-Caley, vol. I, p. 524; vol. IV, p. 451 a (Little Malvern, a curious case); vol. V, p. ix; Leach, *Southwell*, C.S. p. 38; Schmieder, p. 50; Durandus, *De Modo*, p. 271 (lib. III, c. 23); Berchorius, vol. I, p. 180 g; vol. II, p. 576, 10; Reichert, *Acta O.P.* vol. II, pp. 108, 134; AA.SS.O.S.B. vol. IV, i, p. 459; Luchaire, *Social France*, p. 236; Salter, *Aug. Chap.* pp. 198, 227, 264; MS. Bib. Nat. *Fonds de Bourgogne*, 82, § 354 (visitation of Lombardy in 1280); Bromyard, *Pred.* V, viii, § 14 (witnesses "are often hindered by fear; for some of them follow the example of the idol which would not tell the truth lest his head should be broken"); *Bullae Tres*, p. 21 (Nicholas IV, 1290, "monks sometimes fear to reveal [to the visitors] the crimes of their abbots or priors, lest they be sent as exiles to unknown and remote provinces"); Humbert de Romans, *Expos. Regulæ in Maxima Bib. Pat.* vol. XXV, p. 609, cf. p. 543; Migne, P.L. vol. 133 (Odo of Cluny), coll. 599, 600; and vol. 172, col. 1400; Alvarus Pelagius, lib. II, art. 70 (f. 235 b; brethren get their own way by threatening their superiors); *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* vol. III, p. 215; Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* p. 311; Dugdale-Caley, vol. IV, p. 451; *Mon. O.P. Hist.* vol. IV, pp. 108, 135. For similar conditions in post-Reformation France, see Chassin, *Cahiers des Curés*, pp. 27, 180.

## 26

(Chapter XIX, p. 283)

## MURDER—ACTUAL OR ATTEMPTED

Innocent III in P.L. vol. 216, coll. 318 ff. (cf. attempted murder, col. 374); W. H. Frere, *Visitation Articles and Injunctions*, vol. I, p. 84, vol. II, p. 86; F. Winter, *Prämonstratenser*, p. 268; Hauck, *Kirchengesch. Deutschlands*, vol. III, p. 344; F. S. Stevenson, *Grosseteste*, pp. 155-6; Marcotti, p. 156; Ziegelbauer, *Centifolium camaldulense*, 1750, p. 7 (the great reformer of the Order, Ambrogio Traversari, died "not without suspicion of poison"); *Letters from Northern Registers*, R.S. p. 356 (armed men in the way of archbishop's visitation, 1328); Leibnitz, *Scriptt. Rer. Bruns.* vol. II, pp. 453-4; *R. Hist. Soc. Trans.* n.s. vol. 18 (1904), pp. 224-6; Winter, *Cist.* vol. III, p. 18; Martène, *Thes.* vol. IV, an. 1227, §§ 11, 12; d'Achery, *Spicilegium*, vol. II (1723), p. 690, and vol. III, p. 330; J. Nider, *De Ref. Religiosorum* (Antwerp, 1611), pp. 103, 136-7, 147, 193; MSS. Cîteaux at Dijon, bundle *Abbatē conjuncti* (in about 1480, a Cistercian monk plotting poison against his superior); Giraldus Cambrensis, R.S. vol. II, p. 122; *St-Bénigne*, pp. 187, 192; *Rasponi*, p. 173; Berlière, *Honorius*, pp. 243, 244, 246; Prémontré, p. 35; Jocelin of Brakelond, C.S. p. 87; Ordericus Vitalis (Migne), col. 406; Grosseteste, *Epp.* R.S. p. xxxix; Linneborn, p. 50; *Wenlok*, pp. 102, 110; *Konverseninstitut*, p. 93; *Alnwick*, p. 79; Dugdale-Caley, vol. I, p. 194. The Humiliati attempted to murder St Charles Borromeo when he visited them (Schaff. Herzog, *Encyc. s.v. Humiliati*); Pez, *Scriptt. Rer. Aust.* vol. II, p. 655 (other cases cited); Riegger, *Amoen.* fasc. I, p. 121; Mabillon, *Ann.* vol. V, pp. 338, 385, 399, 431, and vol. VI, pp. 55, 75, 95; Tritheim, *Ann. Hirsau.* (1690), vol. II, pp. 351-2; Cless, vol. II, i, p. 459; *Cart. de l'Univ. de Montpellier*, t. I (1890), p. 542; *Rot. Parl.* vol. II, p. 244 b. The historian of the famous abbey of St-Victor has four cases of murder to record (Bonnard, vol. I, p. 38; vol. II, pp. 6 n., 20); Duckett, *Visitations, etc.* p. 229; *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* vol. III, p. 41; Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.* an. 1273, § 26 (in many districts, if a parish priest rebukes his parishioners for what they have done publicly against God and religion, it is at the risk of his own life); *Chron. Abingdon*, R.S. vol. II, p. 261; Dugdale-Caley, vol. II, pp. 507, 509 (for "forced inebriation" read "poison"—*intoxicatio*); Raynaldus, an. 1273, § vi (bishop of Olmütz to pope in 1273; "if perchance a priest be willing [to fulfil his visitatorial duty and] accuse such [sinners] in his own parish, he frequently findeth peril of death on that account").

## THE COMPURGATION SYSTEM

This is so characteristic, and our judgement of it must so deeply affect our estimate of the general value of the visitation system, that it is important to compare the verdicts of modern students.

(a) Rashdall: *Universities*, vol. II, pp. 409, 417:

"Where the offender was a clerk, even in those more serious cases which were not triable by the Chancellor, he was after conviction at Assizes surrendered to the Bishop to be dealt with according to ecclesiastical Law. In the majority of cases he was probably 'admitted to purgation,' i.e. allowed to get a number of other tonsured ruffians to join him in swearing that he had not done it, and was thereupon discharged. If he was refused purgation, or failed in his purgation, he was liable to whatever period of imprisonment in the Bishop's prison the ecclesiastical judge might order. But in the majority of cases the convicted clerk probably got off with a very moderate penance.... In some cases—in charges of immorality, of theft or fraud, and even in actions of debt—the extraordinary system of compurgation, everywhere employed by the ecclesiastical Courts in dealing with offences of the clergy, was adopted in the Chancellor's Court. In these cases, besides the defendant's own oath to his innocence, twelve or some smaller number of other clerks were called upon to swear that he had spoken truly. This was the usual termination of all criminal prosecutions against the clergy in other Courts for all offences from murder downwards. The only way in which the procedure of the Chancellor's Court differed from that of the ordinary Bishops' Courts is that at Oxford clerks really did suffer minor punishments—fine and banishment—whereas elsewhere they would too often have gone scot free."

(b) Hobhouse (introd. to *Reg. Drokenford*, Somerset Record Soc. 1887, p. xxix):

"On the appointed day, openly in the cathedral, the accused avouched his innocence on oath; and, if supported by the oaths of a 'plena manus' of compurgators, he was sent out with a certificate of being restored to good fame. Failing the first purgation he was remanded for a second, at which he had to appear with compurgators of an easier conscience (p. 189). The hand of justice was thus staid, and the clerical wrong-doer encouraged by the impunity which was thus provided for him. To measure the extent of the mischief, it will be needful to remember that every tonsured man was a clerk, even if he had never fulfilled a single sacred duty. Some of those who were thus entitled to 'Benefit of Clergy' were living in secular callings, and living discreditable lives. Every diocesan register is full of warnings of the mischiefs of the system, but the privilege was valued by the class who were most injured by it, and the evil went on unchecked."

(c) J. W. Willis-Bund (introd. to *Reg. Sede Vacante*, part II, Worcs. Hist. Soc. 1894, p. xxviii):

"Similar proceedings took place in the case of John de Cromhale of Hwitenhurst, who was charged with theft, and purged himself in the church of St Nicholas of Gloucester, and in the case of John de Botiler, of Fekenhampton, clerk, charged with theft, homicide, burning of houses, and other things. At first the Commissioners appointed by the Prior to go into the matter were not satisfied that the proclamation had been properly made, and adjourned the matter; but on the second occasion, it being proved that the proclamation was made in the church, at the door of the church, and at the steps of the cemetery, they held it sufficient, and as no one appeared to oppose, the accused was admitted to purgation. The case of Henry Waldyene did not go so smoothly. He was indicted for homicide, robbery, etc., and ordered to appear in the Cathedral at Worcester before the Prior. On it being found that the proclamation had been made, a man appeared and objected to the purgation, because it was notorious that the accused had committed the crime of homicide. The objection, it is said, was examined into and rejected, not because it was untrue, but because the objector could not bring sufficient proof of the notoriety of the crime. And as no one else appeared the accused was admitted to purgation. These instances are good illustrations of the abuse that grew up in the case of guilty clerks. In the one case the verdict of a jury and the sentence of the Court were set aside because the Prior chose to think the accused innocent, and a jury largely composed of clerks took the Prior's view. In the other case the question of guilt or innocence was not raised. All that was gone into was the notoriety of the crime, and it was on this, not on proof of the guilt, the evidence failed and *the accused got off*."

(d) Prof. Claude Jenkins (*Tudor Studies*, 1924, p. 70):

"Compurgation, *which is often assumed to be a mere form*, did not always tell in favour of the accused." We are not told who are the authors here tilted at. Dr Rashdall and Bishop Hobhouse are perhaps the least merciful critics of the system. But neither they, nor any others known to me, really describe it in the words which I have here italicized; and, in any case, a single incident from the single document which Prof. Jenkins happens to be studying cannot suffice for this offhand condemnation of other scholars, who were quite aware of all that he is able here to prove, viz. that there were sometimes judges who did their best to dispense real justice through these outworn methods of procedure. Better evidence, perhaps, than this produced in *Tudor Studies* may be found in Romeyn's register, especially vol. II, pp. 55, 72, 75-6, 189, 251-2, 267, 325, 331-2, where it is plain that the archbishop took pains duly to advertise the coming trial, and to give opportunities for opposing witnesses to testify. But how was he to guarantee such witnesses against the dangers described by Gascoigne? It is a mere darkening of counsel to argue from a single case in a single register, as though we had not the explicit evidence of distinguished medieval churchmen who knew from experience how the system



worked as a whole, and who, in their real knowledge of the facts, saw it with much the same eyes as Hobhouse and Rashdall. Moreover, the details which Prof. Jenkins quotes on pp. 44-5, where the same batch of four compurgators turns up to swear to the innocence of the five different accused persons in five separate cases, do not inspire confidence, even if we take full account of the attendant circumstances. Compare E. B. V. Christian, *Solicitors* (Stevens, 1925), p. 64, for the lenience with which false witnesses were treated in compurgation cases (a London civil case of 1292 A.D.). It is noteworthy that John of Ayton discusses seriously whether it is lawful for the same man to swear as compurgator in two different cases; true, he decides in the affirmative, but on condition that "he is led by the zeal of faith and the charity of love," and has no pecuniary interest in the matter (Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, app. p. 57, col. b). The whole of this and the preceding page are of great value as describing the whole process; so also is Durandus, *Speculum*, bk III, part I *ad fin.* (vol. III, p. 52), and Tamburini, vol. III, pp. 451-7. The following references may enable readers to follow this form of procedure through two series of records; *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* pp. 16, 35, 41, 139, 148, 150, 200, 207, 219; *Alnwick*, pp. 32, 82, 93, 94, 136, 137, 140, 144, 155, 162, 171, 188, 189, 190, 192, 194. Cf. Wilkins, *Conc.* vol. II, pp. 489, 700. The Inquisition made compurgation much stricter for cases of heresy, thus implying that the ordinary process was too lenient. (Lea, *Inq. M. Ages*, I, 456.)

## 28

(Chapter XIX, p. 288)

## NOTES ON THE STATISTICS

## A. Cluniac

If we count the men's houses only, and take the priors (there were scarcely any abbots in the Cluniac Order), we find 6 accused (or, counting those accused by their fellows and exonerated by the General Chapter, 10) out of 22; this gives  $26\frac{1}{2}$  (or 42) per cent. By the same calculation, out of 198 monks, 34 (or possibly 36) were black sheep; this gives us 17 (or 18) per cent.

If we count the nuns, we are met with the difficulty that 2 out of the 4 accusations are multiple, without definite specification of numbers. But, even if we assume each of these multiple accusations to concern a batch of as many as 5 nuns, this only gives us 21 (or at most 22) per cent. of black sheep among the rank and file. Therefore, while *the extreme* that we can urge against these is 22 per cent., *the least* we can urge against the superiors is 25 (6 black sheep for certain, in 24 houses).

## B. Premonstratensian

The 18 houses concerned had 266 brethren, of which 18 were abbots: residue, 248. Among the 18 abbots, there were 9 (or 10) black sheep; percentage 50 (or 55). Among the 248 brethren, 39 (or 41), percentage  $15\frac{1}{2}$  (or  $16\frac{1}{2}$ ).

## 29

(Chapter XX, p. 293)

## PAPAL INTERFERENCE

A very interesting story is told by St Antonino (*Chron.* vol. III, 1586, p. 670) illustrating the difficulties which a first-rate visitor might meet with if he gave the least handle for complaint: "When Pope Gregory IX had committed the enquiry into certain monasteries to certain Dominican friars, and they, departing from the formalities of law, had deposed certain abbots because they found them to be evil, and the people and the cardinals were troubled at this, so that they would fain have recalled what the friars had done, then Master [Jordan of Saxony, minister-general of the Dominicans] came into the pope's presence and sought to appease them, saying: 'Holy Father, it hath oftentimes befallen me that, when I would fain have passed the night at a Cistercian abbey, I found the way to the gate so long and circuitous that it was a weariness to me and my companions to go so far round. Therefore, when the abbey was close under my eyes, I have sometimes gone across the meadows and thus reached the gate more quickly. If then the porter had said unto me, "Brother, by what way art thou come?" and, when I had made answer, "Across those meadows," if he then had said, "Thou hast not come by the right way; turn back, therefore, and come again by the trodden way; for otherwise thou shalt in no wise enter here"—would not that be too hard? So, Holy Father, albeit the brethren came not here by the way of law, which perchance seemed to them too circuitous to depose these abbots (who were nevertheless most worthy to be deposed, as ye may easily learn if ye will make enquiry), yet, if it please you, bear now with that which hath been done, by whatsoever way we may have come thereunto.'"

Dom Berlière, in his exhaustive articles on the Benedictine General Chapters, supplies incidentally some very valuable evidence (*Revue bénédictine*, vol. XIX, 1902, pp. 378-90, 401). Innocent IV, in Southern France alone, relieved between 50 and 100 abbeys from the obligation of keeping the quite recent reforming statutes of his predecessor Gregory IX; he gave a similar indult to Durham (*Hist. Dunelm. Script. Tres*, Surtees Soc. 1839, app. p. lxxxii). Again, in 1342, Clement VI lent a favourable ear to the petition for the relaxation of Benedict XII's statutes, which were not ten years old. A few other examples may suffice out of multitudes: *Henry Salt Collections*, vol. I, p. 267; *Cal. Pap. Letters*, vol. I, pp. 132-4 (cf. *Hen. Brad. Soc.* vol. XXVIII, 1904, p. 87), 138, 141, 150; Busch, p. 533 (attributed to bribery); Prémontré, p. 84; Linneborn, p. 48; Pecham, *Epp.* R.S. pp. 694, 695; Berlière, *Honorius*, pp. 242, 477; Salter, *Aug. Chap.* pp. xxiii, 26, 79, 113; Lea, *Celib.* vol. I, p. 159; Wadding, *Ann.* vol. V, p. 81; F. A. Scharpff, *Nich. v. Cusa*, pp. 173-4; *Chron. Evesh.* R.S. pp. 141, 142 (accusation

of bribery), 149, 151 ff., 162 ff., 191; Council of Lateran, 1179, § 6; *Alnwick*, pp. lix, lx; C.P.L. vol. x, p. 467; Trokelowe, R.S. p. 439. Compare the "victory" of the abbot of St Albans in Rome with the actual circumstances in which this support was gained from the papal court; Gasquet, *Monastic Life in the Middle Ages*, 1922, p. 25, and E.H.R. vol. 37, 1922, p. 611.

## 30

(Chapter xx, p. 304)

## VISITORS' DIFFICULTIES

Grosseteste, *Epp.* R.S. p. 318:

*"To the venerable abbot and convent of St Benedict at Fleury, Robert, by God's grace bishop of Lincoln, wishes health and sincere increase of charity in the Lord.*

"Ye have professed the Rule of St Benedict, which is of super-eminent sanctity; but no man can doubt that he who hath once professed is bound to the observance of his own solemn profession, and therefore that those sin mortally who wilfully and deliberately transgress it. But, as the Apostle teacheth, not only those who commit deadly sin, but also those who consent to the transgressors, are worthy of death; and those consent who, being able to hinder evil, hinder it not. Seeing therefore that ye who profess the said Rule are bound so to teach every one of your monks that they may not only know what they have professed but also live by the same; seeing moreover that ye are bound to send no man forth from your community until, by long custom of living according to the Rule, he hath grown into the habit of regular conversation; seeing therefore that ye are able thus to ensure that none of your flock be criminal, and especially that none be openly criminal, how then can ye, who do not thus, be otherwise than worthy of death? Yet, that ye do not thus, is evident and notorious to us and to all in our parts; for ye send from your abbey to the cell of Minting, in our diocese, men who live in lechery with harlots, who keep private property, disobedient, spending their time in feasting and drunkenness and games, and who blush not to eat flesh even on Fridays. . . . We have expelled from this cell [of Minting] brother Philip, as judicially convicted of fornication, private property, disobedience, wandering abroad, and flesh-eating contrary to the Rule; so also with Theobald and Wabrand and Gerard, as proprietary, intolerably disobedient, vagabond, pryders into the houses of light women, given to illicit games even beyond the wont of worldly folk, and (in a single word) such manifest and gross transgressors of regular observance that they are a scandal and a laughing-stock to the whole neighbourhood. . . . Now, we remember to have written to you elsewhere on matters of this kind, hoping that our words had brought a cure to this disease; but, as it befalleth those who obey not their physicians, that a profitable medicine

turns to their death or the increase of their sickness, so it would seem to have befallen you. For this last disease is worse than the first; yet we, as a physician deeply pitiful to the sick man, and therefore not desisting from his care, so long as there be any hope of convalescence, do write unto you this letter also for a medicine, praying and beseeching you in His name who is the one and true Physician, our Lord Jesus Christ, that you will take this to your cure, and correct those of your flock who are of this sort, lest, for their lack of correction, you bear ignominy before the face of man, and God's eternal condemnation at that strict Day of Judgement. Fare ye well always in the Lord."

Dugdale-Caley, vol. I, p. 269 (Westminster, twelfth century; Abbot Gervase's "administration of the affairs of the monastery was ruinous"; the monks obtained an admonitory bull from the pope; but it was only the king who finally deposed him, after nearly twenty years of scandalous waste); vol. III, p. 381 (Malling, 1324: the bishop blessed Lora de Retlyng as abbess "though against his will, since she lacked all the mental endowments and the discretion which the office and rule demanded, and he knew her to be incapable and ignorant; so that this benediction turned out to be a malediction"); p. 496 (Selby; an abbot deposed in 1269, but re-elected in 1269, was leading a grossly immoral life in 1279 and was deposed in 1280); p. 441 (the prior of Great Malvern, elected in 1279, is found by the bishop to be "illegitimate, a dilapidator, irregular, and notoriously *infamatus* of the crimes of fornication, adultery and incest with twenty-two women"; yet the abbot of Westminster resented this man's deposition in 1283 as a trespass upon his own privileges, Malvern being a cell to Westminster); vol. IV, p. 384 (the difficulties anticipated by Clement VII in suppressing a single convent of three criminous nuns); p. 506 (a nun, who has been leading "an enormously dissolute life for 20 years past" usurps the office of prioress).

*Collect. Anglo-Prem.* vol. I, p. 85; vol. II, pp. 46, 89 (date earlier than 1343; Blanchland abbey is going from bad to worse; the abbot of Croxton beseeches the Chapter General for a special commission enabling him to carry out the necessary reforms); vol. II, p. 109 (abbot of Cockersand, *infamatus*, refuses to appear before two General Chapters in succession; yet apparently he is never deprived).

Nider, *De Ref. Relig.* pp. 119-20 (evil monks put up their spines like a hedgehog, and are joined together like the scales of Behemoth; there is no getting at them; cf. pp. 143, 182, 184, 186, 188, 216-20, 224, 233-56); Jubien, p. 24.

In 1523, the prioress of Chaize-Dieu refused to admit the lawful visitors, and it needed the sequestration of the convent revenues to bring her and her nuns to obedience. About the same time, the hitherto indomitable Geiler of Kaysersberg practically abandoned the struggle for reform. Dacheux writes (p. 500): "Quant à celui-ci [Geiler], aigri qu'il était par tant de luttes et tant d'efforts infructueux, il en était venu, ce semble, vers la fin de sa carrière à désespérer de la réforme. Rappelant l'impuissance des conciles de Bâle et de Constance,

il disait qu'une réformation générale de la chrétienté était impossible, nul concile ne pouvant trouver le moyen de la réaliser; comme preuve il citait la difficulté que l'on éprouvait à réformer même un seul couvent: 'il ne faut rien moins, dit-il, que la permission du Pape et celle du roi ou de l'empereur. Tout le concile de Bâle n'a pas eu le pouvoir de rétablir la discipline dans un couvent de femmes, que soutenait le Magistrat de la ville; que serait-il donc s'il s'agissait des couvents d'hommes, la plupart nobles et ayant chacun un puissant parti? De nos jours,' ajoutait-il, 'il y a quelques années à peine, on a réformé ici (à Strasbourg) plusieurs couvents de femmes, et les réformes ont peu duré; que sera-ce donc de toute la chrétienté?' Et après s'être demandé s'il y avait quelque espoir de voir la situation s'améliorer, il répond: 'Non, d'abord à cause des chefs: ceux qui sont envoyés au concile, évêques, abbés, prévôts, doyens, docteurs, ne veulent pas de la réformation; en second lieu à cause des fidèles, *car vous et tous les autres dans la chrétienté, vous y seriez opposés!*'"

The weakness of medieval discipline comes out equally plainly wherever parochial records enable us to follow visitatorial injunctions minutely; for here they often concern repairs, rebuilding, restoration of lost or decayed church books or furniture, concrete and visible objects. It is true, clerics or parishioners would sometimes falsify the visitation by lending chalices, books, etc. from church to church as the visitor went on his rounds, and thus disguising the deficiencies by a simulated sufficiency<sup>1</sup>. But even this could not easily succeed for any length of time; and the documents supply a frequent—we might almost say, a steady—record of passive resistance. The visitors in the Worms district (1496) frequently complain that no notice is taken of plain injunctions<sup>2</sup>. The French archdeacon Henri de Vézelay's visitation journal testifies to the same inefficacy: in the very first rural deanery come the discouraging notes: "The old psalter must be bound, and the churchyard fenced in; there is a want of service-books; these defects ought to have been corrected long since." In another parish: "All these [serious defects] were to have been corrected last year." In a third: "These [equally serious] should have been corrected a year ago." A cleric, "excommunicated sixteen times, and long since," still kept his concubine publicly<sup>3</sup>.

### 31

(Chapter XXI, p. 316)

#### CYPRIAN, GRATIAN, ETC.

Cyprianus, *Ep.* iv, Pomponio fratri (Migne, *ep.* 72, P.L. vol. 4. col. 364):

"Inspiciantur interim virgines [quae semel statum suum continenter

<sup>1</sup> Complaint of Bp Quivil in Wilkins, *Conc.* vol. II, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Zeit. Gesch. Oberrheins*, vol. XXVII (1875), pp. 227 ff., 385 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Hen. Véz.* pp. 463-5 (in *Bib. Éc. Chartes*, 1893).

et firmiter tenere decreverint], ab obstetricibus diligenter, et si virgines inventae fuerint, accepta communicatione ad ecclesiam admittantur... Si autem de eis aliqua corrupta fuerit deprehensa, agat poenitentiam plenam, quia quae hoc crimen admisit non mariti sed Christi adultera est."

Gratianus, pars II, c. xxvii, q. 1, cc. 4, 5 (ubi hujusmodi virgines in glossa *sanctimoniales* dicuntur).

Matthaeus Parisiensis, *Chron. Major*, vol. v, p. 227:

"Diebus quoque sub eisdem [1251], Episcopus Lincolnensis visitationem fecit in domibus Religiosorum in diocesi sua constitutis; in qua, si quis omnes tyrannidas quos exercuit recitaret, non severus sed potius austerus et inhumanus censeretur... Et, quod indignum est scribi, ad domos religiosarum veniens, fecit exprimi mammillas earundem, ut sic physice si esset inter eas corruptela experiretur. Addiditque horribiles maledictiones, quas super capita transgredientium statuta sua conguessit, quas Moyses scripsit, et benedictiones mosaicas super eos qui eadem fuerant observaturi."

Ex libro historiarum ad usum praedicatorum compilatarum, saeculi tertiodecimi ineuntis (T. Wright, *Latin Stories*, Percy Soc. 1842, p. 39):

"Interim invitatus antistes [visitor] capitulum intravit et abbatissam vocari praecepit, quae ingressa in loco suo solito praesuli[s] considerare festinavit, quam accedentem antistes opprobriis aggreditur, et injuriis fatigatam citius exire compellit, duas quoque quae divulgatum crimen explorarent post eam mittit, quae accedentes et attendentes nullum in ea signum impregnati[onis] invenisse renunciaverunt, quas ipse pecunia corruptas existimans per seipsum rei veritatem explorat. Nullum in ea signum criminis inveniens ad pedes ejus corruit, veniamque de injuriis illatis exposcit, omnesque qui ei crimen objecerant de monasterio voluit expulisse."

Cf. *Anecdotes Hist. d'Ét. de Bourbon*, ed. Lecoy de la Marche, p. 114.

Ambrosii Camaldulensis *Hodoeporicon* (Florence, 1681), p. 61:

"Tristi admodum compulsi nuntio Florentiam petere coacti sumus: quippe unam ex filiabus nostris, oppressam ab impuro et impudico homine [sc. monacho], propinquare partui... Ubi ad locum applicuimus, jacentem quidem illam invenimus, sed partu levatam jam, an alia infirmitate detentam, explorare tunc minime potuimus, indicia quaedam licet id attestari viderentur quae, praesenti monasterii matre, per nos ipsi deprehendimus. Surrexit illa, perturbata nostro adventu repentino; neque tamen, cum secretius admoneretur a nobis, quicquam exculpere amplius potuimus. Et quoniam res suspecta multum erat, adhibere medicum ferme consilium fuit, qui secreta mulieris inspiceret; et illius tamen et nostrae verecundiae tunc parcere satius duximus. Omnes plane de familia negare obstinatissime, ac ferme indignari hujusmodi sibi crimen impingi. Sedato impetu, credere illis fingentes, omnes ad servandum votum castitatus, serena jam facie et animo tranquillo, sumus blanda oratione adhortati; innodatas tamen

anathematis vinculo, a quo nisi a nobis absolvi non possent, si mentiri nobis voluissent, relinquentes."

Confer *Decret. Greg.* lib. II, tit. xix, c. 14; lib. IV, tit. xv, c. 6; *Chronicon Adae de Ush*, ed. E. M. Thompson, 1904, p. 59.

## 32

(Chapter XXII, p. 322)

## PUNISHMENT

Perhaps the most enlightening evidence as to real contemporary opinion on this subject is the tale told by Sir Thomas More (*English Works*, 1557, p. 154; really p. 134). For More is here doing his best to defend the Church of his day against the growing attacks of heretics; and he would certainly not have gone out of his way to tell the story if he had regarded it as inherently improbable. Therefore, whether it be an actual event or not (and I am not aware that it is recorded elsewhere) it was certainly regarded by More as *ben trovato*. He makes his interlocutor say:

"I remember me now what a work I have heard of that was at Lempster in that king's father's day [*i.e.* Henry V's] where the prior brought privily a strange wench into the church that said she was sent thither by God and would not lye out of the church. And after she was grated within iron gratings above in the rood loft, where it was believed she lived without any meat or drink, only by angel's food. And divers times she was houseled in sight of the people, with an host unconsecrate, and all the people looking upon, there was a device with a small hair that conveyed the host from the paten of the chalice, out of the prior's hands into her mouth, as tho' it came alone, so that all the people not of the town only, but also of the country about, took her for a very quick saint, and daily sought so thick to see her that many that could not come near to her cried out aloud, 'Holy maiden Elizabeth help me,' and were fain to throw their offering over their fellows' heads for [the] press. Now lay the prior with holy Elizabeth nightly in the rood loft, till she was after taken out and tried in the keeping by my lady the king's mother. And by the longing for meat with voidance of that she had eaten (which had no saintly savour) she was perceived for no saint, and confessed all the matter.

"In faith, quoth I, it had been great alms the prior and she had been burned together at one stake; what came of the prior?

"Quoth he, that can I not tell, but I ween he was put to such punishment, as the poor nun was, that had given her in penance to say this verse, 'Miserere mei Deus, quoniam conculcavit me homo,' with a great threat, that an she did so any more she should say the whole psalm. But as for holy Elizabeth, I heard say she lived and

fared well and was a common harlot at Calyce many a fair day after, where she laughed at the matter full merrily.

"The more pity, quoth I, that she was so let pass.

"That is truth, quoth he."

Just eighty years ago, the amiable crypto-Jesuit, Dr Oliver, laboured to make out a favourable case for the Devonshire monasteries; and he based this partly on the infrequency of "grosser immoralities" recorded in the episcopal registers, and partly on the assertion that "when such were discovered, as they sometimes were, they were visited with exemplary punishment and disgrace"<sup>1</sup>. For this he gives neither fact nor reference; and, now that the Exeter registers have nearly all been published, we are able to see that the claim is false. It is true that the principle on which all registers were compiled is superficially favourable to such a contention, since the offences which happen to find their way into these volumes are such, in the very nature of the case, as would probably call forth some proclamation of a penalty, while the casual method of registration leaves us little chance of following the case up, and of seeing how far such theoretical punishments were carried out in practice. Yet, even so, the most extensive and detailed of these registers, kept by the strongest of the bishops, Grandisson, shows plainly enough to any careful reader how powerless a very exceptional visitor might be to inflict anything like condign punishment<sup>2</sup>. Yet Oliver's claim was repeated, without documentary vouchers, by Cardinal Gasquet in the first chapter of his *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*; indeed, it may almost be said that the cardinal takes this as the corner-stone of his generalization that "it is unjust to regard [grosser faults and immoralities] as existing [in the Tudor monasteries] to any but a limited extent"<sup>3</sup>. Again, returning to the subject (ed. 1888, p. 334), he claims to read this regularity and adequacy of punishment as a clear lesson from the episcopal registers, but quotes only a single instance, in which we have no evidence whether the punishment decreed was enforced in fact. In a footnote he refers to Nicke's Norwich visitations; we have seen in my text how far these bear him out<sup>4</sup>.

A similar generalization was repeated even more emphatically in the second volume of *Collectanea Anglo-Premonstratensia* (1906). I pointed

<sup>1</sup> *Monasticon Dioc. Exon.* 1846, p. vii; cf. the same author's *Hist. Collect. for Devon*, p. ii: "The attention which they [the bishops] paid to this point [the correction of faults] contributed above all other things to support regular discipline and to prevent licentiousness." For Oliver's status as a Jesuit in all but actual profession, see his life in the D.N.B.; it was surmised by contemporaries that he was thought to be more useful as a propagandist by abstaining from the actual vows, and living as a parish priest.

<sup>2</sup> I gave detailed evidence for this, twenty years ago, in the first of my *Medieval Studies* (pp. 3-9 of the 2nd ed.). No serious attempt, so far as I know, has been made to shake this evidence; compare no. 15 of the same *Studies*, pp. 8 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. I, pp. 37-8.

<sup>4</sup> Farther details in *Medieval Studies*, no. 1 (2nd ed. p. 3).



out in 1915<sup>1</sup> that the claim was here grotesquely exaggerated; the few details given in my text may illustrate this.

More recently, however, Mr Egerton Beck has attempted to prove the same thesis<sup>2</sup>. He carefully avoids dealing with these Premonstratensian records, even when challenged to face their evidence, and is able to quote only one or two cases in favour of his contention. One of them is that of St Germans in 1400 (*Reg. Stafford*, p. 314). In order that readers may judge how far a single instance of this kind outweighs the evidence I have given, I print here the summary of the editor of the Register, Prebendary F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, whom nobody who knew him or his work will accuse of anti-monastic bias: "The Bishop visited St Germans in this Prior's [Aneray's] time 3 Sept. 1400 and found that John Pengelly, Nicholas Julyan, John Brystowe, and Burnard Page (*alias* Skelly), canons, had been guilty of scandalous and immoral conduct. He commanded each of them to be put to open penance. Pengelly was to sit on the floor in the middle of the Refectory, at meal time, and have nothing but bread and water, once in the day, every Friday for seven weeks; for a whole year he was to confine himself strictly to the choir and cloister, and not to walk about the nave or speak to any women (whether of doubtful character or not), unless he had a trustworthy Brother in his company; he was not to undertake any manner of office within the said Priory throughout the year; and he was to forfeit out of his allowance for clothing one noble, to be expended on the fabrick of the Church: should he rebel, the Prior was to shut him up in *ergastulo*<sup>3</sup> *ipsius Prioratus* for eight days, and allow him no flesh meat. Julyan was also condemned to sit on the floor of the Refectory 'duabus sextis feriis, inchoando die Veneris proximo post festum Sancti Michaelis Archangeli,' and to have only bread and water once in the day; for a quarter of a year 'a festo Sancte Fidei'; he was to be confined to the cloister and choir; and to forfeit 40*d.* out of his allowance for clothing, to be applied to the fabrick of the Church; moreover, he was to sleep in the common dormitory. The same penance was assigned to Brystowe; and Page was to abstain from fish and wine for two successive Fridays, and contribute 40*d.* to the fabrick-fund. The Bishop wrote to the Prior (from Launceston Priory) 18 September, requiring him to see to the execution of the sentence in each case, 'in virtute obediencie nobis prestitute.'" We have no evidence whatever, I believe, whether these sentences were actually carried out; and we know from other similar cases, where farther evidence is forthcoming, that even more stringent sentences than this were often remitted or neglected in fact.

I subjoin farther references which may enable students to pursue this subject farther: Durand, *Tractatus*, pars II, tit. xxii, p. 112 (the

<sup>1</sup> *Medieval Studies*, no. 1, pp. 128 ff. Here, again, so far as I know, nobody has ventured publicly to deny the accuracy of the evidence which I produce from the Premonstratensian documents, or to maintain the accuracy of Cardinal Gasquet's inferences from them.

<sup>2</sup> See *Medieval Studies*, no. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *I.e.* prison.

laws against rebellious monks are not kept, "whence there frequently follow great scandals in many parts [of Christendom]"); pars III, tit. xxxviii, pp. 315-16 (clerics sometimes more violent than layfolk, "confiding in their ecclesiastical liberty, and fearing no guilt, since they know they can redeem it with money... If justice were executed upon deliberately homicidal clerics and layfolk, and those ecclesiastics who studiously and voluntarily commit such manslaughter, this would be an excellent remedy for the Holy Church of God against the indiscipline and scandals of clerics and Religious, who now are certain of not being handed to the secular arm for such misdeeds, nor of suffering death, if they are in Holy Orders"); *Reg. Rad. de Salopia*, p. 726; Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. II, p. 721 (Bened. General Chapter of 1343 decrees heavy punishments for serious offences, but with a wide loophole of escape); C.P.L. vol. IX, p. 407; *Archiv*, vol. I, p. 210 (cf. p. 217); vol. VI, pp. 51, 121; Gascoigne, *Lib. Ver.* pp. 24, 143; de Rosny, p. 81; Worcs. *Liber Albus*, introd. § 6; Berlière, *Recrutement*, pp. 54, 63 (pope); *Vis. Dioc. Lausanne*, *passim*; Aube, 1906, p. 196; *Wenlok*, p. 30; Power, *Nunneries*, pp. 465-6, 468-9, 493; *Reg. Mayew*, p. 141; *Reg. Bothe*, p. 250; Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. I, pp. xlv, 641, 676; vol. II, p. 700; vol. III, pp. 245, 364, 718, 721; Worcs. *Sede Vacante*, pp. 143, 180; *Alnwick*, p. lix; *Tudor Studies*, p. 55; Leach, *Southwell Minster*, C.S. pp. 15 (offender to resign or exchange), 37, 62-4, 69; Tritheim, *Opp. Pia*, p. 1073; Martène, *Thes.* vol. III, p. 343 a; Gower, *Mirour*, 20, 100 (men may buy themselves off promiscuously from carnal trespasses); *Eynsham Cartulary*, vol. I, pp. xx, xxix (cf. vol. II, pp. 194-8); *Gesta Abb. S. Alb.* R.S. vol. I, pp. 270-4; *Stud. und Mitt.* 1882, pp. 313, 316; Pecham, R.S. p. 855; *Reg. Romeyn*, vol. I, pp. 154-5, 178, 207, 232, 252, 254, 270; Salter, *Aug. Chap.* pp. xxxvii, xliii, 56, 87, 90, 113-14, 167, 196, 250, 263; Martène, *Thes.* vol. IV, an. 1437 (decree of 1429 repeated for the fourth time, that abbots must themselves be punished when they neglect to punish their monks for serious offences); Ponsonby, p. 78 (deposed prior sent to another house, but wanders about the neighbourhood instead, bringing scandal on the Order); Lea, *Sac. Cel.* vol. I, p. 343 (a whole convent of nuns); vol. II, p. 8 (abbots promiscuously incontinent, yet unpunished); pp. 58-9 (an astounding case of wickedness and impunity); p. 188. Another case he sums up very briefly (vol. I, p. 422): "When in 1410 the stout William, Bishop-elect of Paderborn, had triumphed with fire and sword over his powerful foes, the Archbishop of Cologne and the Count of Cleves, he turned his energies to the reformation of the dissolute morals of his monks. They positively refused to submit to the ejection of their women from the monasteries, and he at length found the task too impracticable even for his warlike temper. For seven long years the quarrel lasted, legal proceedings being varied by attempts at poison on the one side, and reckless devastations by the episcopal troops on the other, until the prelate, worn out by the stubbornness of his flock, was obliged to give way."

Here, again, is a batch of cases where the culprit finds friends outside

the monastery to support him against the authorities: Tritheim, *Opp. Pia*, p. 1058; Bruel, p. 88 (Laveine, 1331: "many scandals...*item*, when the nuns are corrected for the said excesses, unless it be done as they choose, they have recourse to their secular friends and kinsfolk and other nobles for matters which ought to be corrected by their superiors and the authorities of the Order...nor do they permit their superiors to do full justice, whereby the convent is put to expense and the nobles are stirred to hatred against the Church"); Innocent III, *Epp.* lib. XIII, no. 207; lib. xv, nos. 144, 193; Ponsonby, pp. 72-4 (prior of Hardham deposed for "spoliation, sacrilege, adultery and multifold incontinency," through influential friends, becomes, or possibly just fails to become, prior of Shulbrede soon afterwards); Alvarus Pelagius, fol. 130 b; Leibnitz, *Scriptt. Rer. Brun.* vol. II, p. 453; Christopher St Germain, *Division*, ch. xv; H. C. Lea, *Sac. Cel.* vol. I, pp. 150, 159, 282, 318; Abailard, *Opera*, ed. Cousin, vol. I, p. 573; Pecham, *Epp.* R.S. pp. 831, 876, 972; Jubien, p. 37; *Tract. Juris*, vol. XIV, fol. 139, § 51; Salter, *Aug. Chap.* pp. xxxii, 53, 142; *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* vol. III, pp. 115-16 (Brother Robert Bredon of Sulby, guilty in 1491 of "apostasy, and that he brought in again that same woman wherefrom he drew scandal at the last visitation, bringing her into the dormitory to fulfil his lust; moreover, of sending letters and memorials to great folk, even against his own abbot, and showing the secret statutes of our Order to a secular person, and taking refuge, by means of deprecatory letters, under other than the ordinary jurisdiction." He is therefore put under strict penance for 40 days, and banished for 10 years to St Agatha's. Yet, on the next visitation, 1494, he is not on the list of St Agatha's, but still on that of Sulby, next in seniority to the abbot, and in 1497 he is privileged to be *licentiat*, i.e. either in a parish cure or living otherwise by permission outside the monastery, practically his own master). The ease with which offenders could thus escape by apostasy has struck Prof. Mode, who writes in his *Influence of the Black Death on the English Monasteries* (p. 72): "The one outstanding feature in the monastic life of this turbulent period [1350-1370] is the disposition to cast aside the restraints of 'regular discipline.' In a large number of the houses, the monks assumed an attitude of rebellious insubordination. They abandoned their clerical garb and as vagabonds wandered about 'in secular attire' until apprehended and delivered over to their own tribunals. This disposition to renounce their vows was not confined to a few. The following houses had vagabond monks: Lenton, Evesham, Coventry, Battle, Sibton, Penteney, Brugton, Bynedon, Wenlok, Joychurch, Selby, Lesnes, Wynchcombe, St Bartholomew, Thetford, Bradwell, Bordesleye, Montacute, Burton, St Lazarus, Ramsey, and the two nunneries of Kilburn and Haversholm"—representing six different Orders.

Finally, here is a list, not exhaustive but, I hope, sufficient, of offenders who are well pensioned, or actually promoted, after their offence: *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* vol. III, p. 19 (1482, abbot of Langley is "every-

where very greatly defamed of incontineny and waste of the abbey property"; bishop holds a solemn enquiry and finds him guilty; the government of the house is put into commission, and the brethren are enjoined "carefully and laudably to minister to their father abbot in food and so forth<sup>1</sup>, according as he has been supplied by ancient custom, without fraud and murmur, rendering also to the said abbot, at the four terms of the year, a hundred shillings of current English coin in equal portions"; in other words, he had for pocket-money more than a peasant farmer earned for the yearly support of himself and his family); p. 140 (1456; the bishop finds the abbot a waster of the goods, a sower of discord, "and many other things which, as is believed, could be proved against you, which might (though God forbid!) drag your honour into great disgrace and shame"; he therefore deposes him, with a life-pension of 20 marks, or about twice the yearly income of a parochial vicar); Gascoigne, *Lib. Ver.* (dean-elect of Wells, imposed by the pope but rejected by the chapter as "thoroughly unfit"—*valde inhabilis*—bribes himself, with the pope's consent, into the bishopric of St David's); Matthew Paris, *Hist. Major*, R.S. vol. v, p. 84 (1249; abbot of Peterborough, guilty of wholesale speculation, resigns for fear of Grosseteste, but is assigned a whole manor for a life-pension); Dugdale-Caley, vol. III, p. 343; Schmieder, p. 48; Power, *Nunneries*, pp. 99, 600; Peetz, pp. 128, 228; Porée, *Maupas*, p. 11; Pecham, *Epp.* R.S. pp. 101-2, 213, 292; Lea, *Sac. Cel.* vol. 1, p. 342 (king promoted to abbacy of St Augustine's, Canterbury, in 1161, a secular priest who had 17 bastards in one village, and "had no pleasure in lust unless he published it abroad"; he held the abbacy till 1171 when the pope deposed him); p. 343 (abbess of Amesbury with three children, deposed and pensioned with 10 marks a year).

## 33

(Chapter XXIII, p. 340)

## PAPERING OVER THE CRACKS

The extent to which medieval visitors were obliged to compromise with offenders can scarcely be better illustrated than from the diary of Odo Rigaldi, a record as exceptional in its completeness as Odo was exceptional in his visitatorial zeal and efficiency. In 1254, Luke, chaplain of St-Mellon-de-Pontoise, under pressure, "confessed that he was *infamatus* of two women, one of whom is dead, by whom, as he believes, he had a son whom he is bringing up; of another who is yet alive, and this recently; we warned him to abstain from this woman, otherwise we would proceed against him according to law, if we found him again *diffamatus* in this matter." In 1258, "Luke, the vicar, was

<sup>1</sup> *Victualibus*, which in medieval Latin generally includes clothing, firing, etc., besides food.

fouly *infamatus* in many ways of scandalous—*enormibus*—deeds, and we have several times warned him to abstain therefrom, yet hath he not amended himself"; no punishment specified. In 1260, "Luke, the vicar, was incontinent and *diffamatus* of incontinence; and we caused our vicar to enquire into this matter." In 1262, "Luke, the vicar, was still *diffamatus* of incontinence, and very frequently—*sepissime*—slept in choir; although he could chant and sing well if he would." In 1263, "we found Luke the vicar, as on other occasions, grievously *diffamatus* of the vice of incontinence, especially with a certain lame woman, whom he confessed to have known carnally not a year since; because we found him incorrigible and obstinate, and seeing that we had very often warned him, yet, unmindful of his salvation and wasteful of his reputation, he would not cease from troubling, therefore we commanded him then to resign his benefice, or we would proceed against him in form of law; this he did not do, but besought with tears that I would have some mercy upon him in this matter. So we, condescending to his supplications and to those of some who interceded for him, gave him leave to exchange for some other place between now and Candlemas [*i.e.* between Dec. 10 and Feb. 2]; yet he swore and promised of his own accord, upon the Holy Gospels, that he would resign his benefice within that period, and that, if not, we might utterly deprive him thereof, without calling him before us or other form of law; he swore also that from thenceforward he would claim no part therein, nor gainsay this deprivation." At Odo's next visitation of Pontoise, in 1265, he notes with regret that Luke is "*diffamatus* of dicing, tavern-haunting and incontinence, and the mayor of the town had imprisoned him at the complaint of a certain woman upon whom he was said to have attempted rape." But this was in all probability another Luke, the deacon, nephew to Luke the canon, who in 1263 had already been defamed of incontinence but had begged himself off with a pilgrimage to Mont-St-Michel and an oath formally recorded in writing, that he would resign in case of relapse. Luke the vicar had probably exchanged already to some other living<sup>1</sup>. English bishops also were unable to do more than get rid of the offender from their own diocese into some other; cf. Wilkins, *Conc.* vol. 1, 641 (St Edmund Rich) and 676 (A.D. 1237).

## 34

(Chapter xxvi, p. 381)

## CONTEMPORARY GENERALIZATIONS (1)

The monotonous unanimity of the witnesses in this Appendix and in no. 36 became so much more striking, even to myself, when I came to put their evidence together, that I resolved not to commit it

<sup>1</sup> pp. 194, 315, 344, 391, 447, 477, 534. The case of another Pontoise vicar, Peter, is almost as significant as Luke's, pp. 315, 344. Luke the deacon's letter is on p. 667.

to the press before submitting it to one farther test. I had read the best-known modern apologists for the pre-Reformation Church—Janssen and Pastor and Gasquet, for instance—and was therefore all the more anxious to avoid the sins of omission which I find myself obliged to allege against them. If these writers distort the evidence so strangely by ignoring witnesses of such capital importance as Trithem and Dionysius the Carthusian and Chancellor Gascoigne and the University petition of 1414, have not I fallen into similar distortion by omitting, on the other side, some clear and general defence of contemporary Religious by contemporary writers? True, it was unlikely that any such should have escaped the researches of Janssen and Pastor; but, to make assurance doubly sure, I turned to a still more definitely apologetic source indicated in a recent Roman Catholic volume; *i.e.* to three articles entitled *Before the Reformation*, in *Historisch-politische Blätter f. d. katholische Deutschland*, vol. LXXIX (1877), pp. 17 ff. This journal might be called, for more than two generations, the official representative of denominational Roman Catholic history in Southern Germany; therefore it held out another chance of repairing possible omissions. In fact, it contributed nothing; most of the writer's references were to modern books, and his main contemporary authority was Nider, whom he quotes and summarizes very inaccurately. He alludes to Trithem's "complaints, which every-man knows" (p. 27), but omits to quote them, and entirely ignores their capital significance. So also with Dionysius; the author extols him to the skies as a glory of German scholarship and churchmanship on the eve of the Reformation, but has either neglected to read his works, or thought it prudent to conceal their contents. This, in short, is typical of his whole argument; while rightly protesting against those who condemn the Church on the strength of individual cases of bad churchmen, he attempts to prove her efficiency by citing and briefly describing a few dozen of distinguished ecclesiastics who flourished during those few generations. One might read him without realizing that we possessed any contemporary generalizer beyond Trithem, whom he suppresses, and Nider, whom he distorts. Such writings as this—and, in my experience, they are typical—do all the more to emphasize the crying need for such a catena of contemporary judgments as I have here attempted.

#### FROM 1140 TO 1349

Bernard, a Cluniac monk, sometimes called of *Morlaix*, but of whom little is known personally, dedicated his *De Contemptu Mundi* to Peter the Venerable in about 1140. Parts of the book have become famous through J. M. Neale's translation: "Jerusalem the Golden," etc. Bernard's words here may be compared with Peter's own, which I print in vol. I, pp. 268-9, and some of which were repeated in 1310 (see farther down in this present Appendix). I translate them from Wright, *Satirical Poets of the Twelfth Century*, R.S. vol. II, pp. 54-5.

**"The clerical Order is fallen from its height, and the monastic from its citadel; the former is broken, the latter is dissolved and turned topsy-turvy.** The one is lamentable, the other utterly miserable; each still stands in name, but in order it has been overturned and lies low. Each one stood firm, one showing forth glory and the other comeliness; each is fallen; each has lost its bloom and is withered." [Hence the author passes on to a catalogue of sins for the next eighteen pages; a list obviously not fastened exclusively upon monasticism, but almost equally significant in its apparently deliberate collocation with this condemnation of clergy and monks, from which it runs straight on without even a disjunctive conjunction.]

St Bernard tells us how the Irish St Malachy, in 1139, found at Clairvaux a reality of monasticism which was foreign to his own native land; he besought permission to leave four of his own attendant clergy there,

"in order that they may learn from you what they shall afterwards teach us. And they shall be to us as a seed, and in that seed shall the nations be blessed; even **those nations [of Ireland] who from days of old have indeed heard the name monk, yet have never seen a [true] monk**"<sup>1</sup>.

Archbishop Frederick of Cologne wrote formally in 1126:

"In the whole of our province there is scarce one congregation of this sex to which a woman who might have purposed to vow continence could flee"; the nuns, that is, often went out and married.

There is an excellent study of Gerhoh, provost of Reichersberg, in two pamphlets by K. Sturmhoefel. He was born in the last years of the eleventh century; his learning and character brought him into contact with the papal court, and his writings are among the most instructive of the time. I quote from Migne, P.L. vol. 184, coll. 1278-85:

"But the women who are said to dwell together under the virginal profession, whether they live as canonesses under the Rule of St Austin or as nuns by professing St Benedict's, will never be better able to be restored, **after many lamentable and ruinous abuses,** to the ancient form of apostolic discipline, than if they read intelligently, gladly read again, and obediently keep that book of St Augustine *On Virginity*, and his other *On the Adoration of God*." Nuns are wedded to Christ; and "This Bridegroom, since he willeth that the friends of the Bridegroom should bring Him spouses wherein is no spot or wrinkle to be found, will be sore offended if the bishop slumber in correcting **those abuses of modern wickedness which reign now in nunneries not dwelling under apostolic doctrine but lying under the ruin of apostasy.** These are they who, casting off that modesty which is the mistress of honour, count all things lawful that are pleasant, and count as pleasant the things forbidden by the Apostles and the holy Fathers... Why, therefore, do the bishops hold back before this so public apostasy of these women, as though they did their deeds

<sup>1</sup> *Vit. S. Mal.* § 39. These four finally led a Cistercian colony to Ireland, which gave birth to five daughter-houses.

in secret? **It is shameful to say what they do in secret;** but yet they do openly so much that, if the bishop obeyed the prophet's command, *Dig in the wall* (Ezek. viii, 8) he would soon say: *Behold a door!* (*ibid.*) whereby he could enter in to destroy that which is being done within. . . . Therefore let the bishop dig in the wall, forbidding to the nuns all precious clothing which is not given out from the sisters' common wardrobe, but which all indiscriminately accept from anyone, and retain with unlawful and wicked boldness; to say nothing of what their lovers give them and the private gifts of their friends." Let them not be allowed private property, for "this abuse is very prevalent—*multum regnat*—in the nunneries, wherein **the common apostolic life is altogether decayed**, and a selfish and apostate life is prevalent. . . . When [the bishop] undertook pastoral care over them, he promised to hand them over to God as chaste virgins to a single Spouse. . . . But how can he be careful for the greater things, who is negligent in correcting the less, which nevertheless do unquestionably minister openly to the greater [faults]? For whereunto doth [the nuns'] work for their private [gain] lead, but unto the great crime of apostasy?" The sword of visitation sleeps in its sheath; the offenders find protection in their own multitude and in what has now become inveterate custom; though officially called *sanctimoniales*, they are more truly *daemoniales*; there can be no health in the convents so long as "they do private [needle] work, wherein they serve no common profit, but as they will, whom they will, and as long as they will; in order thereby either to gain friends or to follow some private gain by private work"<sup>1</sup>. [Compare ch. 30, where he describes the nuns as protesting against being compelled to keep the strict Rule.]

My usual rule is to cite only witnesses who generalize, in the sense of asserting definitely that *many*, or even *a majority*, of the Religious of their day are serious transgressors of the Rule. In this present case I think that the whole tone of the passage, and especially the final complaint of the effect of these things upon the Church as a whole, warrants its inclusion.

St Elizabeth was abbess of the Benedictine nunnery of Schönau in Nassau, not to be confused with the Cistercian house of the same name in the Neckar valley. She entered it at the age of 12, became the recipient of divine revelations at 23, and died in 1165 at the age of 36. In chapter x of her *Book of the Ways of God* (ed. F. W. E. Roth, Brunn, 1884, p. 93) she speaks thus:

"Keep yourselves with all diligence from the ways of those who bear the outward show of your Religion, but deny the virtue thereof in their deeds. . . . These have turned their backs upon the Truth, yet they boast to walk in the way of contemplation. They make God's law and His righteousness subservient to their own covetousness and pleasures; and by means of the endowments which belong to Jesus Christ they shamelessly procure wealth and honours, and nourish their own uncleanness. They enter with pride and pollution into

<sup>1</sup> These prohibitions of private work recur in synodical decrees and visitatorial injunctions, all through our period, with a frequency which testifies to their inefficacy.



God's sanctuary and the reverend abode of angels; and with irreverent ministry and unwashed hearts they dishonour the adorable purities of Christ's sacraments. If any man rebuke them, they mock, and sadden him with curses and persecution. Even those who are best among them are themselves abominable in God's sight.... They profess to despise the world, yet they worship worldly things, walking shamelessly and whirled round by every gust of self-will. They cast aside the institutes of the Fathers, thrust themselves into worldly business, and **fill the Church with scandals**. For this reason, behold! **Religion suffereth contempt, and faith is rent in twain**.... And I spake unto God, saying: 'My Lord, may we securely affirm that all these sayings have come from Thee?'... But He, looking upon me with great sternness, said: 'Believe from the bottom of thy heart, that **these words which are written here have proceeded from My mouth**.'"

Abbot Eclbert, brother to this same St Elizabeth of Schönau, was a conspicuous writer of his own time. In a letter to the archbishop of Cologne (Reinhold, 1159-67), he speaks of the decay of "almost all the churches":

"I have set my heart to understand the causes of this so general ruin. I looked at the churches of the clergy, and therein I found great and innumerable irregularities—*enormitates*—**I beheld the nuns' convents; some of these I should rather call Satan's liming-twigs and decoy-cages**; and, lo! strange fire<sup>1</sup> had laid all waste, and the lilies of chastity had withered, and deplorable soul-slaying was everywhere evident to the whole world. Therefore, considering all things, I both understood the causes of the ruin aforesaid, and marvelled very greatly at God's long-suffering.... **Would that He would raise up among us some Phineas, to pierce with the dagger of strict justice these irregularities and outcries in the Lord's tabernacles!**"

St Hildegard [1100-78] was abbess of a convent near Bingen. Her revelations and prophecies were much valued in her own day and beyond. The following passage is translated from Migne, P.L. vol. 197, coll. 263-4.

"These men are called *conversi*, but very many of them are not converted to God in their way of life; for they love contrariety more than uprightness, and do their work with a voice of rashness, saying of their superiors: *Who and what are these men? and what were we, what are we now?*... Now, ye masters, rebuke and correct these men aforesaid, these lay brethren in your Order; for **the greater part of them work neither by day nor by night, since they serve neither God nor the world perfectly.**"

The remarkable *Dialogue between a Cluniac and a Cistercian* was written between 1153 and 1174, probably much nearer to the latter date. The author had entered a Cluniac monastery, *ad succurrendum*, when his life was despaired of; recovering, he lived ten years in the Order, and then joined the Cistercians in search of a stricter life. His evidence must thus be discounted

<sup>1</sup> Compare my note on this phrase, p. 271 above.

as that of a partisan; but on all questions of primary importance it might be abundantly corroborated from contemporary documents. I translate from Martène, *Thes.* vol. v, col. 1636.

"Among secular folk, whether clergy or laity, the Rule of St Benedict is most renowned and famous far and wide; therefore those who come from the world to take our vows enter the cloister with the intention of living thenceforth as St Benedict ordained and the Rule teacheth. For they believe that monks live thus, **not knowing how they have declined from their Rule**; and when, at their profession, they hear or pronounce the name of St Benedict, they conceive of no other manner of life than what St Benedict instituted. . . . But afterwards, hearing how the Rule is interpreted in the chapter house, and considering their actual manner of life, they marvel to find it widely different from St Benedict's ordinance, **and they are scandalized**; which scandal cometh from nothing else but the [quibbling] interpretation [of St Benedict's Rule]."

For Philippe de Harvengt, see Berlière's little pamphlet published in 1923. Born about 1100, he became prior of Bonne-Espérance in 1130 and abbot from about 1157 to a few months before his death in 1183. As a Premonstratensian, as a younger contemporary of St Bernard (with whom he differed on a matter of business), and as one of the most learned men of his age, he had every right to extol the monastic revival of his own day. But it will be noted that he puts limits to that revival, and contrasts these new men with the average unreformed monk, whom he criticizes still more plainly in other passages, such as I have quoted in chapter I.

"Fair weather is driving rough winter away, and, rebelling against winter, is sweeping the frost from the ground and renewing us with spring; for the imitation of God, which was withered and effete, is growing green again. **Claustal Religion, freshly bedewed, is flourishing again**; in monasteries, as in trees, no small fruit is ripening; into the whole workshop of holiness fire has fallen from heaven, and is glowing to a white heat under the breath of vehement blasts. This laudable workshop, as we call it, wherein a new discipline of life is being forged, is seen to have found its first focus at Cîteaux; that is where the spark of Religion was first fostered in the furnace of poverty. There, I say, the monastic Order, which had long been dead, is being revived; there the old ashes are cast off and reforming grace is renewed; there it is being filed and laboriously wrought again to its proper form; for there men execrate that delicate softness which is grateful to other monks; there men cling insatiably to labour and poverty, mourning and silence. In short, the mind of Cîteaux does not hang upon the people's tithes<sup>1</sup>, but she stretches out her hand to labour with such nimble energy that she struggles thereby to earn

<sup>1</sup> The earliest Cistercians refused to imitate other Orders in appropriating parochial tithes; but this self-denial broke down before the twelfth century was out. See vol. I, p. 389. Prémontré began with the same self-denial: but Berlière shows that, before Philippe's death, his abbey possessed the tithes of thirteen churches (Berlière, *Harvengt*, p. 12).

her humble food and raiment, showing that she forgets nothing of her first origin. For because that shape or colour of the primitive frock, which earlier monks had chosen in token of their penitence or mourning, had been changed by modern monks into self-indulgence and boasting, it seemed good to Cîteaux to take a coarser habit of another colour; that, even as the simple sheep beareth wool disguised by no dye nor deception, even such a garment should the Cistercian wear, refined by no laborious care nor delicacy<sup>1</sup>. This affords a matter of **derision and detraction to some secular mockers, and still more frequently and more bitterly to many even among the [older Orders of] monks**, who, not setting their hands to imitate the good which they see, do at least sharpen their teeth to shameless defamation. [But this leaves the Cistercians unmoved, and] thus they so cling to the Rule of Benedict, under which they live, that they persevere to the letter in all things which he either commands or advises, thinking that they would not keep the Rule perfectly unless they showed the utmost diligence in small things, as well as in great."

Glorious as the Cistercian reform is in general, Clairvaux is a model monastery even for Cistercians. Moreover, among the canons a parallel reform has arisen,

"and, in the place called Prémontré, [Christ] hath congregated certain men fervent in the spirit, whereby He hath excited others, far and wide, unto due Religion. There indeed so fervent is the holiness of these canons, so are they steeled against worldly enticements, that in them there seems **a true revival of that apostolic life which was labouring even to the death in the throes of a long sickness** [their labour, their silence, their poverty are admirable]; and certainly God willed that these things should be done specifically in the valley [of Prémontré], in order that the very shape of the place should be conformable to this business of salvation, and that he might plainly show that the canons, who had found an occasion of ruin in their lofty dignity and untrammelled authority, had now a timely remedy in voluntary depression and the opportunity of penitence.... If all those who may have undertaken this life do indeed hold perfectly to it, then they will not fear the mockery either of layfolk or of monks; for neither can bring any accusation against their good life. For this has, to begin with, perfection a hundredfold, to be followed by reward a thousandfold; since for the present it is endowed with the perfection of its merits, and in future it shall find the consummation of its rewards."

Peter of Blois, archdeacon of Bath, lived from about 1120 to about 1200. He was one of the most distinguished literary men of the century; much

<sup>1</sup> As this first Cistercian habit was made of "natural" wool, so the first Franciscan was made of the commonest and cheapest kind of "natural," made from black and white sheep indiscriminately. Thus it is that the Cistercian is called either "grey" or "white" monk, and the Franciscan "grey" contains so strong an element of brown. But different early painters give very different shades to the Franciscan grey: it was evidently long before it was standardized.

allowance must always be made for his love of rhetoric and of quotation; but, when used with due caution, he is of considerable value for the social historian. He is always enthusiastic for monastic life in the abstract; he "conveys" from St Jerome that sentence which was later adopted in *Piers Plowman*: "If there be a paradise in this present life, it is in the cloister or in the schools" (*Ep.* 13 *ad fin.*). But this does not blind him to certain manifest tokens of decay. To the abbot of St Albans (*Ep.* 29) he quotes the story of the widow's cruse, and comments:

"Let me work out this similitude: while hospitality flourished in monasteries, worldly princes vied with each other everywhere in augmenting religious houses with great possessions; but, when there was a lack of vessels, the oil came to a stand. For, **from the time when hospitable liberality began to grow cold in monasteries, the largesse of great folk stood still and ceased**; and I fear lest the poor widow's sons, whom the prophet had set free, may be seized again as slaves by their creditors, for holy Religion, who is mother of the monks, is now given to be trodden underfoot; her possessions are torn asunder in rapine and in spoil... **That curse of Job hath come to pass**: 'If I have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof (for from my infancy mercy grew up with me, and it came out with me from my mother's womb), if the stranger stayed without, and my door was not open to the traveller, let my shoulder fall from its joint, and let my arm with its bones be broken'"<sup>1</sup>. He speaks plainly of the commercialism which had crept in among the otherwise healthy Cistercians, and the consequent cooling of popular devotion (*Ep.* 82). The exemption system had not yet begun to tell upon the young Cistercian Order; but Peter insists on its evil effects in general (*Ep.* 68): "**Abbots hate to have any corrector of their excesses**; they embrace the lax licence of impunity, and loosen the yoke of claustral discipline, giving complete liberty to their desires. Hence it cometh that the possessions of almost all monasteries are given over to plunder and to spoil; for the abbots, outside their houses, foster their flesh and their desires, caring for naught if only they themselves be richly provided, and if there be peace in their own days. **Meanwhile the cloisterers, as lacking a head, spend their time in idleness and vain talk**; for they have no superior to incline them to the fruit of better life; nay, if you heard their tumultuous contentions, you would think that the cloister differed little from the marketplace." In his commentary on Job he writes<sup>2</sup>: "It cometh oftentimes to pass that the vice of gluttony destroys the merits of those who have chosen the way of Religion and the purpose of holy peace. This grieves me above all else, that **in these days men of Religion and professors of holy Order contend to outnumber each other in dishes at table**. If a Religious finds himself with a quick pulse, or troubled urine, or a dull appetite, he consults the physicians, examines spices, composes electuaries, uses no sauces but such as are made of cinnamon

<sup>1</sup> xxxi, 17-22, slightly rearranged by Peter.

<sup>2</sup> *Opp.* Mainz, 1660, p. 489.

and cloves and pistachio-nuts.... Certainly this is not in St Benedict's Rule, but flesh and blood hath revealed this to wretched men. So much for gluttony; but of drunkenness, which is the part and the result of gluttony, I will deal briefly."

Giraldus Cambrensis, 1147-[1222], archdeacon of Brecon and bishop-elect of St David's, was one of the best of a brilliant group of scholars at a time of great intellectual activity. The reader will naturally discount his words to some extent as those of a rhetorician and a stylist. His references to monachism are so abundant that, within my limits of space, I can give the best idea by simply transcribing in full from the index which concludes his collected works in the Rolls Series (vol. viii). Prof. Brewer, who edited these volumes, and presumably compiled the index, was a strong apologist for monasticism.

"*Benedict, St*, his rule against monks living in 'cells,' etc., iv. 37; **progress of corruption in his order**, iv. 100....

"*Cistercians*, order of; their rule better on the Continent than in England, iv. 45; Richard I marries his daughter '**Avarice**' to them, iv. 54; their wisdom in having no 'cells,' and in holding chapters, etc., iv. 102, 114; **their hospitality, industry, abstinence, wealth in cattle**, etc., iv. 113; become the 'ordo ordinum,' iv. 115, 218; ruined by cupidity and ambition, iv. 116, 118, 245; their cupidity stimulated by their hospitality, iv. 120; live, not on rents, but **by labour**, *ib.*; the vice of the order reprobated by many within it, iv. 121; instances of their **greed and oppression**, iv. 129; famed for skill in **over-reaching their neighbours**, iv. 134; in Wales destroy a parish-church and escape penalties by bribes, *ib.*; **churches appropriated by them and left to ruin**, iv. 136; their appropriation of churches restrained by the Lateran council, iv. 138; two Cistercians turn Jews, and the satire of W. Map thereupon, iv. 139; the smaller houses in Wales oppressed by the larger, iv. 143; a rich house in Wales robs a poor nunnery, iv. 152; special prayer against them added by Giraldus to the litany, iv. 160; a woman tonsured and admitted into an abbey for the sake of her money, iv. 179, 180; their houses in Ireland filled with 'proprietarys' and those who became monks to escape the English, iv. 182; their aggressions aided by their command of ready money for bribes, iv. 197; extort money from the sick, and promise indulgence to those buried in their cemeteries, iv. 198; **make women monks to get their money**, iv. 200; outbid other orders for the favour of Will. de Ypres, iv. 202; make a merit of their want of scruple in enriching their order, iv. 203; in special favour at Rome and with Alexander III, iv. 204; forbidden to hold parish-churches, and cure of souls, iv. 204; infringements of their rule as to rents, pleas, and cure of souls, iv. 207; unlike the Cluniacs, **live luxuriously** only in secret, iv. 208; drinking bout between Henry II and a Cistercian abbot, iv. 211; luxurious living at a Cistercian house in Sussex, iv. 215; **deterioration of the order** when it ceased to be poor, iv. 217, 223; animosity of W. Map against, iv. 219; jests against, by Henry II and W. Map, iv. 220; instances of their fraud in acquiring lands, iv. 225;

regard their neighbours as enemies, iv. 227; Cistercian monks make a field sterile with salt to induce the owner to sell it, iv. 228; a Lincolnshire abbey confiscated for cheating in a sale of bacon, with other cases of fraud and immorality, iv. 231; plot against the life of a sick benefactor, iv. 241....

"*Cluniacs*, order of: invective against, i. 103; **nuns seldom received by, without payment**, ii. 289; abuses in their dependent 'cells,' iv. 31; **notorious for gluttony**, iv. 38; illustrations of their **incontinence**, iv. 43; need of general chapters to purify the order, iv. 45; monks sent from France to cells in England worse than native-born monks, *ib.*; Richard I marries his daughter 'Luxury' [*i.e.* lechery, G.G.C.] to them, iv. 54; gluttony of a prior at Hereford, iv. 57; infected with the Cistercian vice of avarice, iv. 58; **need of a periodical visitation**, iv. 93; their method in France of avoiding a fast, iv. 98; **instances of their profligacy** in S. Wales, iv. 101; speech of abbot Serlo against them, iv. 105; their custom to engage in pleas, and to hold parish-churches, iv. 207; unlike the Cistercians, **live luxuriously in public**, iv. 208....

"*Monks*, strictures upon, i. 103, 224, 301, 302; special prayer for protection from, added by Giraldus to the litany, i. 213, 298, iv. 160; forbidden by the Lateran council to live alone, i. 324; a pie and a pasty exacted from novices on admission, ii. 290; make worse bishops than the secular clergy, iii. 127, iv. 75; ambition of English abbots and priors for Welsh and Irish bishoprics, iii. 343; **life of, contrasted with that of hermits**, iv. 18; difference in morals between those in monasteries and those in 'cells,' iv. 35; their reluctance to return to their house from a 'cell' expressed in a proverb, iv. 37; roving monks condemned by St Benedict, *ib.*; **property of religious houses wasted by too many officials**, iv. 38; **instances of their fondness for good living**, iv. 38 *seqq.*; **their gluttony leads to incontinence**, iv. 43; story of a monk and a stranded whale, iv. 46; **enormities of monks sent to cells**, iv. 51; quarrels caused among them by drink, iv. 55; exemptions of, from episcopal jurisdiction the effect of pride, iv. 60; in cathedral churches in England instead of seculars as elsewhere, iv. 65; instances of monks who made good bishops, iv. 80; inferiority of, to the clergy whom they despise, iv. 83; only the better monks worthy of being made clerks, iv. 84; **scandals among, from intemperance**, iv. 85; **necessity for periodical visitations of monastic houses**, iv. 93; forbidden to engage in lay causes, iv. 96; **imitate laymen, in the luxury of their dress**, iv. 98; attempt of an English house to avoid a fast, like the French Cluniacs, *ib.*; **fast in public, but feast in secret**, iv. 99; **instances of their profligacy**, iv. 140; of ignorant monks professing medicine, iv. 173; an incorrigible member must be expelled for fear of contamination, iv. 176; appropriate parish-churches, **expel the parishioners**, and carry off the dead, iv. 177; strive to obtain the burial of the rich, and admit even the excommunicated, iv. 178; **corruption of religious houses in Ireland**, iv. 178; women made monks to secure their wealth, iv. 179,

180, 200; honesty by a poor abbot in Normandy and its reward, iv. 195; **dangers from monks travelling alone on secular business**, iv. 235; qualities needed for good abbots and priors, iv. 237; **God gave abbeys, the Devil cells and cellarers**, iv. 238; qualities of the true monk, iv. 247; ought not to go to law, iv. 252; custom of, to travel to Rome in lay attire for greater safety, iv. 336....

**"Nuns, scandals from the vicinity of abbeys of canons and**, iv. 183."

An author, probably Dominican, has left us a description of society in Alsace in the early thirteenth century<sup>1</sup>. He writes:

"The priests kept concubines almost as a general rule—*quasi generaliter*—for the peasants commonly encouraged them thereunto, saying that priests could not contain, and that it was therefore better to have one wife than to solicit or defile all men's wives. **Canons and knights sinned with nuns of noble birth**. The lord Henry, bishop of Bâle, left at his death twenty orphan children upon their mothers' hands."

Arnold, author of the *Chronica Slavorum*, may almost certainly be identified with the Benedictine of that name who was abbot of St Johann at Lübeck before and after 1200. As his latest editor claims, his book shows him to have been "a man of singular erudition"; and, "taking him on the whole, we must place him among the most trustworthy authors of his age." I quote from p. 153 of this edition (*Mon. Germ. Hist.* vol. xxi, 1869).

Satan has succeeded in infecting Religion with pride: "Woe unto thee [Leviathan], for thy presumption, since thou hast sent many of them [the monks] to perdition! . . . Thou compellest to a life of ambition those who, refusing to bear Christ's light yoke and easy burden, gladly accept thy yoke, slaves to surfeiting and drunkenness, walking in pride of life and lust of the flesh and of the eyes, always defiling themselves before God... The food [of Leviathan] is a chosen food, the life, alas! of spiritual folk, which sometimes beginneth in innocence, but often—*plerumque*—when it should have gone forward, descendeth to lubricity; which hath the sweeter taste to him, in proportion as it hath the more spiritual savour through the condiment of well-doing... What was the life of the monks of old, but the purity of innocence, the path of justice, a model of life, the way to paradise?... But **possessions have grown, and Religion hath vanished**; for, while they began to live carnally through abundance of worldly goods, they began also to be carnally minded... So it hath come about that only the form of Religion hath remained, whereas the rule of righteousness hath altogether perished from them [the monks]."

We find Innocent III, in 1213, writing officially to the General Chapter of Cluny<sup>2</sup>. He mourns to relate that

**"a good many—*plerique*—though not all, are now in many ways fallen from their earlier good estate**; [the great priory of La

<sup>1</sup> *M.G.H. Scriptt.* vol. xvii, pp. 232 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Migne, P.L. vol. 216, col. 791.

Charité-sur-Loire, once so rich and flourishing, is almost bankrupt,] and in other ways, as we have heard, **both in you [at Cluny] and in others committed to your care, you have become an example so pernicious that you seem the successors of the earlier Fathers only in your dwelling-place and in your raiment, not in prerogative of virtues:** nay, the more numerous were those to whom those your predecessors showed examples of correction by their masterly life, the more are they whom ye **now infect with the contagion of rottenness.**"

The visitors, complains Honorius III, are negligent in reforming the monasteries in the provinces of Trèves and Lorraine,

"which are very much decayed both temporally and spiritually"; they must now grapple seriously with their task, "in order that **the lamp of Religion, which is as it were extinct yet still smoking** in the said monasteries, may be lit again." For this, he grants them special powers (Manrique, *Annales Cistercienses*, vol. iv, p. 62).

A Benedictine General Chapter was held at Angers in 1220. The statute by which it was attempted to remedy the habit of shirking services begins thus:

"Since, through the non-observance of the precepts of the Rule, **almost all Religion is deformed in these days of ours**, therefore Religion must needs be reformed, with God's help, by the diligent keeping of those same commands" (*Mélanges d'archéologie, École franç. de Rome*, etc., iv, 1884, p. 351).

Gregory IX, in 1231, published statutes for the reform of the Cluniac Order. The preamble relates how

"We are cut to the heart to hear...that **the Cluniac Order...** in these days, hath turned to the bitterness of an alien vine and **bringeth forth wild grapes**, such as set men's teeth on edge; it hath become **a snare and a ruin**, a stone of offence and a stumbling-block...Your buildings also are desolate in many places as though the enemy had laid them waste, and many are left as a covert in a vineyard, and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers...Wherefore, wishing to reform this deformed Order, and to restore **this fallen Order**, We hereby decree, etc., etc." (J. du Breul, *Aimoin, etc.*, 1603, p. 836).

Again, in 1236, Gregory wrote concerning the Cologne province of Benedictines:

"**All, both superiors and ordinary monks, have turned aside from the discipline of the Rule**, and all are become unprofitable, and **there is scarcely one to be found among them who doeth good**" (A. Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, vol. iv, p. 333 note).

The following letter was sent round to different parts of Christendom by Gregory IX in 1232. The visitors here appointed, in their letter of reply to the pope, complained that the relaxations had become so inveterate with time as to have acquired something like the force of legal custom; it will



be practically impossible to punish them unless the pope will grant extraordinary powers for this occasion. I translate from Matthew Paris, *Chron. Maj.* R.S. vol. III, p. 234.

"Seeing that it had frequently come to our ears that the monasteries of the province of Canterbury are **enormously decayed—enormiter collapsa—both spiritually and temporally, through the wickedness and carelessness of those who dwell therein**, therefore We, unwilling to pass their faults any longer unnoticed, lest, if we left such faults uncorrected, we might seem to adopt them for our own," do hereby order a general and efficient visitation. A similar letter was sent to the Exempt Orders (*ibid.* p. 238). The pope there writes: "For we understand that **some—nonnulla—exempt monasteries of the diocese of Canterbury are deformed spiritually and grievously diminished in worldly possessions**, seeing that the monks and nuns thereof, seduced by the Devil's suggestion, and unmindful of that pact of their Lord God wherein they renounced not only their goods but also their own persons, by the profession of their Order, nor fearing that death-sentence upon Ananias and Sapphira, do privately appropriate and retain to themselves, not without note and guilt of theft, the goods of their monasteries, do hunt after pecuniary gain, with no venial sin, by trading and by usury; moreover, that they cast away the discipline of the monastic Order, so that their persons are exposed to contempt and **Religion is blasphemed.**"

St Antony of Padua (1195-1231) is certainly among the most celebrated of all the followers of St Francis. He was famous for his ascetic life and his pulpit eloquence; and his statue may still be seen everywhere with the infant Jesus in his arms. I give his evidence in the order in which it happens to come in his printed works, omitting without farther notice some of the Bible references which interrupt the thread of his discourse<sup>1</sup>.

(p. 27 a) "But, alas! how many Religious go forth from the tomb of contemplative life, from the sand of penitence, from the Orient of grace! They go forth, I say, as Esau and Dinah went forth from their father's house, they go forth from God's face as the Devil and Cain went; like Judas the traitor, with his money-bag, they quit Christ's company and go down into the desert plain." Again (pp. 32-3): "Alas! what clefts, what divisions and dissensions there are in this rock of Religion! whereupon, if any seed of God's word fall, it bringeth forth no fruit, not having the dew of grace of the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth not in the clefts of discord but in the abode of truth. Truly, where are clefts, **there are quarrels in the chapterhouse, in-discipline in choir, murmurings in cloister, gluttony and intemperance in refectory, rebellion of the flesh in dormitory....** Sad to say, Religion, which should preserve the spices of virtue, the sweet odours of morals, is being ruined and made into a garner of

<sup>1</sup> *S. Francisci Ass. necnon S. Antonii Paduani Opera Omnia*, ed. de la Haye, Lyons, 1653.

common wares. Wherefore Joel saith in his lament [i, 17]: 'The garners are laid desolate' (that is, the cloisters of the canons); 'the barns are broken down' (that is, the abbeys of monks); 'for the corn is withered.' By corn, which is inwardly white and outwardly reddish, is signified chastity, which preserveth cleanness for itself, or charity, which keepeth God's love for itself and for its neighbour... Arise therefore, O Lord, against the lecherous, who are on the way to the Devil, and who, sleeping themselves in their sins, believe that Thou sleepest. Arise against false Religious, who are as a rock without the dew of grace. Arise against usurers, who are as sharp thorns, and help and deliver us from their hands." Later (pp. 144-5), he comments on Apoc. ix, 2: "This smoke, blinding the eye of reason, cometh from the pit of worldly covetousness, which is the great furnace of Babylon. By this smoke were the sun and the air darkened, whereby Religious are signified; *sun*, because they should be pure in chastity, warm in charity, shining in poverty; *air*, because they should be airy in their height of contemplation. But, in reward for our sins, the smoke is gone forth from the pit of covetousness, and hath now blackened almost all men... For it darkeneth the splendour of Religious, and blackeneth the excellent colour of heavenly contemplation... the whiteness of ivory chastity, a whiteness reddened with burning desire for the Heavenly Spouse. Alas! this excellent colour is changed nowadays, blackened with the smoke of covetousness<sup>1</sup>, concerning which [St John] addeth: 'And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth.' Locusts, for their leaping, signify all Religious, who ought to join their two feet, (poverty and obedience,) and leap to the height of life everlasting. But alas! they are come forth with a retrograde leap, from the smoke of the pit upon the earth; and, as it is said in the tenth chapter of Exodus, they have covered the whole face of the earth. No markets are held nowadays, no secular or ecclesiastical courts are held, wherein you will not find monks and Religious. They buy and sell again, build and tear down, and [in Horace's words], change round to square. They call their kinsfolk into court, litigate before judges for their needs, hire lawyers, and bring witnesses who are prepared to swear with them for some transitory and frivolous and vain matter<sup>2</sup>... 'The flame [of covetousness] hath destroyed all the trees of the field' (Joel i, 19). This field is Religion, into which the trees have been transplanted from the field of unlikeness, that is of worldly vanity, in order that they may bear the fruits of glory." In another sermon: "The ass [of Matt. xxi, 2], leaving the heights and creeping along the plain, is **the life of clerics and Religious, which hath left the heights of contemplation and moveth slothfully and stolidly along the plain of carnal pleasure.** Alas! with how many bonds of delights and cords of sins is this ass bound!

<sup>1</sup> Compare p. 198, where St Antony writes again: "This pit is covetousness, the smoke whereof hath now blackened almost all Religious."

<sup>2</sup> Compare p. 224: "How many Religious," who ought to be buried in the cloister, are awakened to ambition and living public lives.

'And a colt with her,' saith Matthew. This colt is the cleric or Religious, who is well named colt—*pullus*—as being defiled—*pollutus*—with many vices. He is found with the ass, sucking from behind at her dugs of gluttony and lechery. But 'Loose them and bring them unto me.' O Lord Jesus, what sayest thou? Who is he that can loose the bonds of clerics and false Religious, the riches and honours and pleasures that hold them bound, and tame their pride and bring them to Thee?... 'For from the prophets of Jerusalem is pollution gone forth into all the land' (Jerem. xxiii, 15). 'Loose,' quoth He, 'and bring unto Me.' Contempt of the world and humility of mind loose all bonds, and bring the ass and her colt unto the Lord... O! would that clerics and Religious would accept this great King as their rider, and bear him gently like tame beasts, that they might be worthy to go in with Him into Jerusalem on high! But, because they are sons of Belial, that is, unyoked, therefore (as Jeremiah saith, ii, 5) they have walked after vanity, and are become vain, neither said they: Where is the Lord?... God shall overthrow the horse, that is, the foaming and unbridled pride of Religious who think themselves great under the habits of Religion and the outward show of holiness; but that great and mighty Lord, who regardeth the humble and putteth down the mighty, shall cast forth this horse from the heavenly Jerusalem, whereunto no man shall enter save he who hath humbled himself to death, even to the death of the cross." In the next column, the saint deals equally plainly with episcopal shortcomings.

In his sixth sermon after Trinity, he returns again to the subject (p. 241). The goring ox shall be stoned to death, and even its owner, if culpably negligent, shall suffer death also (Exod. xxi, 28 ff.). **"Let abbots and priors hear this; for if they have a goring ox—a monk or canon that is proud or drunken or lecherous—and have not shut him in, but he hath scandalized man or woman by his evil example, then both that ox shall be stoned, for he shall die in his iniquity, and the abbot or prior shall be punished who would not shut him in..."** Alas! how many Religious are there who worshipped [false] gods (Exod. xxxii) in Egypt (that is, in the world), in the desert (that is, in Religion or the cloister) and, because they have not the fire of charity, therefore their sacrifice profiteth them not, 'From morning even until noon they cry, saying: O Baal, hear us' (1 Kings xviii, 26). What is this crying to Baal, but to get or to appear higher [than their fellows]? 'But there is no voice, nor any that answereth,' that is, to their desire; and therefore they cry louder and louder. 'And they cut themselves with knives,' that is with fastings, 'and lances,' that is, with scourgings. 'They disfigure their faces' (Matt. vi, 16); they first fast on the vigil, that they may afterwards celebrate the feast of their belly. In Elijah's day, the prophets of Baal cried and were not heard; but in our days they cry and are heard; they are set in higher places, that they may fall with the more grievous fall. At first their voices were humble, their habit vile, their bellies thin, their faces pale, their public prayers assiduous;

but now they thunder out threatenings, they go in copes and in mitres, their belly waddles before them, their faces are ruddy, their sleep is assiduous and their prayers are null. **Elijah shall come, shall come and take the prophets of Baal and slay them at the brook Kishon.** Solomon shall come and slay Adonijah who would have reigned, and Shimei who cursed David, and Joab who slew two princes of Israel that were better than he." Two briefer allusions to the pride and ambition of Religious may be found on pp. 272 a, 302 a. Finally (p. 304 b), he expounds Ezekiel's description of the seventy Jewish elders who were found offering incense to idolatrous abominations (viii, 9 ff.), and proceeds: "We must pray lest these elders of the house of Israel, multiplying that sacred number of seven by seventy, should remain in their errors and worship the pictures of idols, that is, of their own vices, and lest the steam of their sacrilege rise up rebelliously to God. The Religious of our day are called seventy men, because they ought to have the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit in perfection of works. But they are of ill-repute, and what do they?" **'They stand before the pictures, and Jezonias in the midst of them'**—the man who, as the Interlinear Gloss hath it, had lost his religion and worshipped idols in the temple of God. Those 'pictures on the walls' are phantasms of pride and gluttony and lechery in the mind, as the dissembling of hypocrisy in Religion, or a Religious who loveth carnally his parents, and perchance his children. These are signified by 'the abomination of the animals,' that is, the uncleanness of fornication, parents and friends, in painted images. Lo, what sort of pictures they adore! And, worse still, Jezonias, who is the abbot or prior, 'son of Saphan,' which is being interpreted 'of judgement,' that is, of everlasting death, he who should forbid this to them, he it is who 'standeth in the midst of them' worshipping the same pictures; 'and everyone had a censer in his hand.' This censer in his hand betokeneth the revenues of the monastery, which were given for the sake of almsgiving and sacrifice, and into the hands of the superior; but these companions of Judas who bore the bag are censuring their own pictures with the censer of almsgiving and the incense of sacrifice offered for the dead; that is, **they give the goods of the monastery, which belong to the poor, unto their own kinsfolk and other persons, who need not be specified one by one.**"

William of Auvergne—Guillelmus de Alvernia, or Parisiensis—was one of the most remarkable medieval bishops of Paris (1228-49). A warm supporter of the newborn Franciscan Order, he energetically combated clerical indiscipline on the one hand and, on the other, the rising tide of philosophic scepticism at the University of Paris, stimulated by the recent translations from Arabic versions of and commentaries on Aristotle. There is an excellent monograph on him by Noel Valois (Paris, Picard, 1880). The

<sup>1</sup> "Sed infamati quid faciunt?" It is possible that Antony meant these words in a rather less sweeping sense: "But what do those [Religious] who are of ill-repute?"

following extracts are from his *De Moribus* (*Opp.* Rouen, 1674, vol. 1, pp. 229 ff.).

"Poverty saith: 'Wheresoever I am, there you always see, in Religious houses and in all other dwellings soever, my daughter religion... I give such to Religion and make her fat, even as my contrary famisheth and consumeth her, by almost entirely transferring meditations and sacred readings and prayers and other sacred exercises and occupations, whereby Religion is fed and established and nourished, into computations and weighings, into anxieties for keeping and for acquiring, into lawsuits and quarrels, into feeding the greed of great folk and appeasing the rage of the powerful, and into the hiring of advocates. She it is who **changes divine service into a disorderly noise**, when men treat it perfunctorily and mutilate the chant by slurring over some syllables and omitting others altogether, so that we should call it **rather an intolerable tumult than the service of God**, even as the Lord himself hath called it (Amos v, 23): "Take away from me the tumult of thy songs." In the chapterhouses of such monasteries the discussion and examination of sins have ceased, or they are very brief and lukewarm, sparing vices and sins, signalized less by corrections than by illusions. In rich abbeys there are calculations and reckonings of revenues, of payments and receipts, so long and so scrupulous that these men seem rather money-changers than cloisterers, and (as St Augustine saith) what is not given to Christ is swallowed by the budget. **As to the vices and sins among them requiescent in pace**, nor is there any to scare them away; such folk display rods or scourges ostentatiously for all incomers to see, yet they keep them only to maintain **this most laughable hypocrisy**; would that they themselves knew how few there are who believe in this vain show!<sup>1</sup> **I (saith Poverty) banish utterly these abominable occupations, and leave no place for them.** Where I am, I make the amplest room for God's praise and service; I care naught for [disputes about] justice, nor for guards nor for thieves or robbers; and, what is more, I care naught for ice or frost, for moth or for rust, for plague, or for rot in the corn or murrain of beasts, naught for wars or battles or burnings or overthrow of cities or houses; I am at full peace and utterly unconquered; no man, for the sake of gaining or winning me, provokes either lawsuits or war... The law-courts, so far as I am concerned, *requiescent in pace*; I raise no cry there; no man draws up a deed on my behalf or commences an action; nay, what is more, the laws make no mention of me; no statute was ever made on my behalf or concerning me... Moreover, today also, and not only in ancient days, holy men prefer my nothingness to all worldly wealth; for they will not enter those Orders which are rich in worldly possessions, however religion may prosper or flourish in them; it is

<sup>1</sup> The text in this sentence seems to leave something to be desired, and the earlier edition gives no help (Paris, Regnault, 1516, f. 117), but the general sense is clear.

for my sake that they have preferred the Order of Friars Minor to all others, and, if this be [not] plain in itself, it is proved by their testimonies; wherefore my nothingness hath enriched those Orders with excellent persons. [After elaborate but discursive satire against the wealth of older Orders—their elaborate kitchens, abundance of flesh-food, etc., he then draws a lurid contrast between the parishes where poverty reigns, and the rest. Poverty is as a dyke against gluttony and lechery, prodigality and pride; the accumulation of riches fills up and levels this dyke.] And if earth (that is, earthly possessions) be cast upon this dyke, by any man's gift or donation, then men receive it with applause and effusive thanks; such are the cloisterers and professors of all Orders, who seem to have taken refuge within the ramparts of poverty in order that they might there be safe, and as it were within a citadel; for by express vow they have renounced all worldly possessions, and on this account have fortified themselves at every point with the rampart of poverty. Yet it is very plain how far they have already filled that dyke, and have not only levelled it, but even raised it above the circumjacent soil; for **they have far greater abundance of earthly possessions than even their secular neighbours**; wherefore, instead of that dyke, they have around them not merely heaps of riches, but lofty hills, from which they are miserably at the mercy of the enemy who attacks them and incessantly overwhelms them. In short, they never repair their dyke, because they never cast away therefrom their earthly substance; nay, such amendment is what they most hate, and make it their constant complaint; if any man will repair it or deepen it again, that man they regard as an enemy, and whensoever they can **they pursue him either with the spiritual sword or even with that of the flesh**.... Though they are professors of poverty, they avoid and hate her above all things; and, seeing that they persecute so sore the men who would repair and deepen their dyke, must we not say that they wish to be taken captive and to be held for ever in the Devil's prison? Let themselves look to it, **are they not apostates from that essential vow of Religion, to wit, poverty?** [Guillaume proceeds to refute, in detail, the specious pleas that Religious who live on the scale of wealth and comfort do not break this vow, because their wealth is held and enjoyed in common and not in particular. He sums up the practical effect of this neglect of the Rule:] **Innumerable folk desert the habit of Religion**<sup>1</sup>, like those abandoned clerics who are called *Goliardi*; and such folk are all the more filthy, in proportion as they can get worldly possessions to feed their lusts. **Others, again, are cast into the cloister by their parents or kinsfolk like puppies or piglings whom their mothers cannot feed**; in order that they may be dead to the world not spiritually but civilly, so to speak, that is, that they may lose their portion of the patrimony, which will devolve upon those who remain in the world; and, so far as this is

<sup>1</sup> I venture here to read *Religionis* for *Religiones*. If we took the text as it stands, Guillaume's condemnation would be even more sweeping.

concerned, such a casting-forth or drowning, or the intention thereof, is simony. Similarly, those who enter the cloister for the sake of bodily livelihood, having no other means, enter not into Religion but (so to speak) into Eating...they may reasonably say that vulgar French saying, that they never had their feet in Religion...Such men are oxen tied to the crib; for, by that single vow which they express on entering into Religion, they thereby bind, or rather chain themselves mainly to the crib, since they [fix their attention] on this matter of food. Monks of this kind we are wont to call kitcheners and refectorers, because it is to the kitchen or refectory or cellar that they make their profession in heart and intention, whatever else they may do. Those who either enter or are thrust in to the end of getting wealth for themselves or their kinsfolk (that is, to get priorates and provostships and other high offices) enter as thieves and robbers, who, oftentimes lurking under the clothing of domestics or even of monks, enter for the sake of theft, lying in wait even under shelter of the cowl with the aim of stealing worldly goods and withdrawing them from pious uses, and turning the money to harm. **These, like foxes, feign death spiritually, with the habit and the tonsure, in order that they may plunder these things....**O, how difficult it is not to be corrupted by the society of rich folk!"

The so-called *Dictionarius Pauperum* is a theological dictionary by Nicolas de Byard, a French Dominican who attained great celebrity as a preacher in the middle of the thirteenth century. I quote from the British Museum copy (Paris, Regnault, 1512, f. 89, 1).

"Thus many [Religious] grant their soul to the Devil as a market for trade, for they think of and attend to nothing but worldly goods. These have left the world in body, but stay there in mind. Their body is in the choir, their heart in the market. [They are mere simulacra, like Lot's wife and the bolster with which Michal deceived Saul; like Christ's tomb, where the garments were left, but the body was gone. Again, f. 99. 3; monks ought to have all things in common]; but generally the contrary is the case; for they take others unto themselves as partners in their sins, and appropriate to themselves alone the goods which God hath given."

Berthold of Regensburg speaks strongly of the destruction of discipline by bribery: "**Mali laici, mali religiosi**; that is the very devil incarnate." And again: "Accursed be he that perverteth justice... that is true today, and truer from day to day. Such are all lay judges and spiritual judges who neither have nor use justice. **If spiritual judges kept to justice, then there would not be so many adulterers or disobedient folk, whether in cloisters or outside cloisters....**Fie, evil judge, spiritual or lay, how many souls go from thee to hell through thy fault, and what an outcry will there be against thee at the Last Day, when thou shalt be accursed, and all the heavenly host shall say Amen, amen, Lord, amen!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Predigten*, vol. I, p. 215; vol. II, p. 217.

Albert the Great was the first of the great Dominican schoolmen, and the master of St Thomas Aquinas. I translate from his collected works, ed. Lammy, vol. ix, 1651, p. 381.

"By sirens, are signified **nuns who with their deadly chants lure the souls that sail over the ocean of this world**, such as shall be in the days of Antichrist, and, alas! **such as now are.**"

In the great Benedictine abbey of Molesme, the thirteenth-century author of the *Life of St Robert* wrote that:

"this man's refined holiness is proclaimed with all the greater justice and glory since, **in these days of ours, scarce any man is to be found who feareth God**"<sup>1</sup>.

St Bonaventura was professor at Paris, a leader among the great Franciscan schoolmen, and one of a group of three (Odo Rigaldi being another) who did most of the work at the Ecumenical Council of Lyons in 1274. In his *Quaestiones circa Regulam* (Q. xix), he represents his interlocutor as saying:

"Moreover, we see that **all Religious Orders are failing in religious life, even if they seem to be progressing in worldly wealth and in certain ceremonial matters**. I would fain know the main causes of this default." [The saint makes no attempt to deny the fact; he confesses the gradual change, and is only concerned to account for it.]

Humbert de Romans [1205]-1274, was one of the most distinguished general-ministers of the Dominican Order. His criticisms must be read in the light of the relations between friars and the older Orders; also, we must remember that Humbert wrote not only at a time when the Dominicans were the most learned body in Europe, but that he himself was one of the most learned of that body, and may therefore be expected to lay special stress upon the deficiencies of the older Orders in this respect. At the same time, he wrote under a strong sense of responsibility to the truth. My first extract is taken from the 9th section of his *Exposition of the Rule of St Augustine* (*Bib. Max. Patrum*, vol. xxv, 1677, pp. 634-5).

"From default of learning many evils have resulted in Religion and in monasteries; here it may suffice to touch upon ten points. The first is, the blindness of ignorance... The second is, **much uncleanness**... How should they guard against uncleanness, when they did not recognize what was unclean? Again, it is no wonder that uncleanness should abound where the waters of wisdom were lacking. How should the precepts of the Rule be kept where they were not understood? How could these blind folk keep to the path of Religion? The third is, that those who entered the monastery with infirmity, or who fell into infirmity, were not tended<sup>2</sup>. For, even as there shall be health where there are many counsels, so, where counsels are none, there shall be death. The fourth is, that children who entered into those monasteries did not profit; nay, they **perished for lack of**

<sup>1</sup> *Cart. Molesme*, ed. Laurent, vol. 1, p. 133, note 13.

<sup>2</sup> The context shows that Humbert speaks here not of bodily but of spiritual sickness.



**spiritual food.** For, if they asked for bread, there was none to break it unto them, but their souls fainted within them for hunger and thirst. The fifth is, that those who were attacked in these monasteries were overcome, since they had not the sword of the spirit, whereby especially our invisible foes are overcome... The sixth is, that **the sacraments were trodden underfoot**; for those who did not recognize the dignity and virtue of the sacraments had no due reverence for them, even as swine have none for pearls... The seventh is, the corruption of simony, both in reception of brethren and in appointment of superiors. In many monasteries the sin of simony was nothing thought of, since it was not recognized... The eighth, that **in many monasteries they led a carnal life**; for the brethren, having no spiritual delights, sought those of the flesh. The rational soul, the noblest of God's creatures, fashioned for the delights of eternity, cannot live without delights [of some sort]. The ninth is, that there the smallest advantages were set above the great, as for example external beauty, which is vain, was preferred to that inward beauty which is true<sup>1</sup>. The tenth is, that men shrank not from very great evils; as **unworthy celebration [of the Eucharist]**, which is compared to the slaying of Christ<sup>2</sup>. [St Paul saith]: 'Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord,' whereupon St Ambrose noteth: 'He shall pay the penalty of Christ's death; that is, he shall be punished as though he were a slayer of Christ.'... [In these unlearned monasteries] are mere statues of Religious, who are prefigured by Lot's wife changed into the pillar of salt. A statue is a body without spirit, like unto a man in outward things, but lacking all that is within a man. Seeing that the house of Religion is founded as a place of salvation, that is, that men may easily work out their own salvation there, therefore **it becometh uninhabitable when it is made a place of damnation**, so that scarce any soul is saved there; that is, when the multitude there presses on to damnation, and few or none hold men back therefrom, or draw them to salvation. Since therefore it is most pleasing to God, and most profitable for Religion, that it should be taught, therefore have I, least of the Order of Friars Preachers, trusting in the Saviour's lovingkindness and not in mine own strength, striven to compose this present work to the glory of God and to the profit of humble folk; wherein I have collected in brief certain things pertaining to Religion which are scattered throughout the Scriptures, in order that Religious folk may be the more easily instructed in that which pertaineth to their state."

He speaks equally plainly in his *Instructions for Preachers* (*ibid.* pp. 458 ff.): "**There are many Religious in whom almost all good things have perished. There are others who have kept**

<sup>1</sup> The allusion, of course, is to the wealth of monastic buildings and ornaments.

<sup>2</sup> The theme is common among medieval moralists, and always refers mainly to celebration by unchaste priests.

some good, yet lost much; but they assert that everything is well done and executed among all... Religious of evil life are harmful to their congregation in material things; for, by reason of their evil life, alms and endowments are not given to them as of old, but are rather dissipated. Again, [they are harmful] in the matter of persons; for on this account good folk have no devotion to join their community; and therefore **congregations of this kind consist of unworthy persons only**. Again, in the matter of souls; for the inmates of such communities go not upwards to heaven but **downwards to hell; and that which was once a way of salvation is now a road to perdition**... Moreover, the prayers of Religious who live ill are oftentimes of little profit to the dead, through whose endowments these men have abundance of worldly wealth. Again, their sins are a very great scandal to the living." In the next chapter (vi) Humbert tells us what should be the virtues of true Religious, but distinctly implies that these are the exceptions. He returns to the subject in chapter xvii (p. 462). Here again, while describing the qualities of good monks, he constantly reminds us that there are *quidam* who do the opposite of these things. Then (ch. xviii, p. 463) he comes "to dissolute Black Monks (*i.e.* Benedictines and Cluniacs). **There are some Black Monks who have nothing or hardly anything of Religion but the mere frock**, as we have seen in our discourse of the separate virtues of Religion... For some of them are not only lacking in good, but are **far worse in wickedness than secular folk**... For **there are many among them whom, if we dug into them as into walls<sup>1</sup>, we should find doing that which is shameful to say**; and this is evil; nay, they corrupt their fellows also, drawing them to divers sins, according to the words of Isaiah li: 'When ye entered in, you defiled my land'<sup>2</sup>, and, worse still, they even **give horrible scandal to their neighbours**. Wherefore he saith farther, 'and made my inheritance an abomination,' which is worst of all... [The Black Monks] are endowed beyond all others with worldly goods; and therefore they are the more guilty if they fight not laudably according to the exigency of their pay. Another [of their favoured conditions] is the rank of those who come to them; for many nobles and great folk give them their children for their soul's health; therefore, woe unto them if they so live as to lead these to hell with themselves. And note that some of these monks **plead in their own excuse their commerce with the world**; for (as they say), being mingled among worldlings, they are sometimes unable to do well among them. But against this stands Leviticus xviii, 3: 'You shall not act according to the manner of the country of Canaan, into which I will bring you.' Others **plead the customs of their predecessors**; but against them also we may quote (Lev. xviii, 30): 'Do not the things which they have done, that have been before you.' Others **plead the**

<sup>1</sup> The allusion is again to Ezekiel viii, 8, which should be compared with these words.

<sup>2</sup> This is actually Jeremiah ii, 7.

**multitude of their companions** [who do so], against which stands Exodus xxiii, 2: 'Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil.' [Coming in the next chapters to the Cistercian and Premonstratensian reforms, he is unfavourable; yet even here he writes (ch. xxi):] **Although Religion flourishes among many White Monks**, yet, alas! some are found among whom it is much decayed, so that such can no longer be called white sheep of Christ, but **the Devil's sheep**. [Some are whited sepulchres; in others the blackness is plain and notorious;] and they who were wont to be cloistered Religious now run about among granges and manors and cities and courts... And the good works of hospitality and almsgiving, which proceeded from manual labour... hath ceased. [The white colour was chosen for their frocks, among other reasons,] to distinguish them from Black Monks, lest they should be supposed to be like unto them, since they had sunk into great irregularity—in *multam dissolutionem*... Yet, alas! **some of these are become like unto the Black Monks, or worse**, even as Jerusalem became worse than Samaria (Ezekiel xxiii, 4). And, whereas they should be painted over with divers fair virtues, they are painted with divers abominations, as in Ezekiel viii, [10]... and, under the clothing of white sheep, in the place of Christ and His angels, there are ravening wolves. Moreover **these are the things which move good old folk to tears, who have seen the glory of the first state, and now see this miserable state**. [In the Congregation of Tiron, and among other Grey Monks, there is again need of reform (ch. xxii). The Carthusians (ch. xxiv) are practically companies of hermits, and therefore truer to the earlier ideals; yet even these have to some real extent relaxed their first vigour, and must beware of farther relaxations. The Order of Gramont (ch. xxv) has the advantage of retirement, temporal affairs being managed for them by the lay brethren;] but, even as this seclusion is a good thing for many, so it is a great evil for some; for the tempter hath easy access where no rebuker is to be feared, as the authority saith. Wherefore St Paul saith of some folk: 'The things that are done by them in secret' are not only evil but so abominable that 'it is a shame even to speak of.' And this is signified by Ezekiel viii, 8: 'Son of man, dig in the wall,' and then: 'Go in, and see the wicked abominations which they commit here.' Therefore we must persuade these who live a secluded life, that they should attend to this; even though they have escaped from men's eyes, yet they have above them the eyes of God, who will judge them from above. [To the nuns he is distinctly more favourable, on the whole, than to monks (ch. xliv).] Now concerning these said Religious women, or handmaidens of Christ, we must note that some, brought into the convent by their parents in infancy or even as fairly grown girls, are dissatisfied with this estate; wherefore the good that they do is less acceptable to God; for, as Scripture saith, God looketh on the heart; and St Paul (Col. iii, 23): 'Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart.' Others there are who **make this way of salvation into a way of perdition**, seeing that in the convent, which is ordained

unto salvation, they live either incontinently or with private property or in disobedience. Would it not have been better for them to remain in the world? or not to have renounced worldly things, or to have kept their liberty? Others, even though they live not knowingly in sin, yet they keep no good guard over themselves, nor bear in mind the frailty of woman and how the Devil led Eve astray; wherefore, at Satan's instigation, **these frequently fall into sin.** Others again, not attending what Spouse they have, to wit, Christ the Eternal king, bear themselves not so decorously as befitteth the spouse of so great a king, from whom nothing can be hid of all that His spouse doeth, and who is exceeding jealous of His spouse, and of exceeding power to punish her. [Finally, among the 'very many' who are ruined by the **frequentation of brothels**, he names 'even Religious' (p. 506 c; other significant passages may be found on pp. 462 f., 464 d-h). But more important, perhaps, than even his strongest utterance in his books, is the practical advice which he pressed upon the Ecumenical Council of Lyons in 1274. The Crusades were flickering out; the one chance of success seemed to lie in the enrolment of a really efficient army, paid at a decent rate. To meet this outlay, he proposed five fresh sources of taxation from the clergy:] *thirdly*, if those priories wherein sometimes a handful of monks are leading a scandalous life should be applied to this purpose. *Fourthly*, if those ruined abbeys for which there seems no hope of reform—*quorum reformatio desperatur*—should be applied likewise to the same purpose. [In a later clause, he proposes] that solitary and ruined priories be made into communities—*collegia*—wherein Religion should be kept, with provision for the inmates' livelihood"<sup>1</sup>.

Cardinal Hugues de St-Cher is far from an indiscriminate critic of the monks. Some allowance must be made for the superior attitude often taken by Mendicants towards Possessioners, for St-Cher was a distinguished Dominican of the second generation. But, in two places at least, he protests against exaggerations, and in another he shows great sympathy for occasional lapses, so long as they are made good by a return to regularity of life<sup>2</sup>. This makes it all the more remarkable that he should return so often to the criticism of existing monastic conditions, and should so emphatically condemn them on the whole. Again and again, he gives us sunny pictures of what monasteries should be, or of what he thinks they once were, but never, so far as I can find, of monasteries as they were in his own days. To the actual monasticism of the middle and later thirteenth century he applies words which the ordinary educated reader of today would be slow to use without considerable qualification.

There are many passages in which he bewails clerical backslidings in general, without formal distinction between Secular and Religious.

"Ecclesiastical persons are a laughing-stock to all men, and their words are not believed, because, while they preach charity and humility and chastity, to these they oppose **greed and pride and incontinence**; therefore their life is reprobated and their teaching is derided.

<sup>1</sup> Mansi, *Concilia*, vol. xxiv (1780), pp. 120, 130.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. vi, fols. 95, 3; 196, 3; 227, 2.

...The priests care not nowadays for the cleanness of the temple"<sup>1</sup>, "Heads of the church are sometimes more rapacious and cruel than worldly princes"<sup>2</sup>. "No men have such opportunities of sin as the clergy; for they abound in riches, and are idle, and are honoured; which three things are a cause of sin. Wherefore Ezekiel saith (xvi, 49), 'This was the iniquity of Sodom thy sister, pride and fulness of bread and abundance, and the idleness of her'<sup>3</sup>. [He is even prepared to repeat St Bernard's indignant exaggeration; the clergy are worse than the laity<sup>4</sup>. Frequently, however, he speaks of Religious in especial.] Nowadays Christians 'walk not as also the Gentiles walk' (Eph. iv, 17) but worse than the Gentiles; and **clergy worse than layfolk, and Religious worse than Seculars**<sup>5</sup>. [They are often without real vocation: 'Many...are poor in the world, and enter the cloister that they may become rich'<sup>6</sup>.] **Some men sometimes enter some monastery to fill their bellies...**others enter from ambition... others, that they may gain praise... others, to do penance and serve God more freely; these men are led by the Holy Ghost<sup>7</sup>. [Two principal defects in this great and imposing structure of monasticism are the insecurity of their material foundations and of their spiritual foundations.] One is in their possessions; for these are sometimes ill-gotten, for [Religious] **take gifts even from usurers and from robbers**; but these are alien revenues, as Jeremiah saith (xxii, 13): 'Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness.' The second evil is in the persons; for they **receive not fit persons**, nor with a good intention, and therefore [they receive] such as live ill in Religion. Such are winter-stones<sup>8</sup>. Micah saith (iii, 10): 'They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity'; ye found Religion with wicked men and your kinsfolk and sinners. [Religious are often tempted to self-indulgence; from fasting they turn to feasting; they waste money on superfluous buildings; far from turning stones to bread] **many do the contrary, and turn the bread of the poor into the stones of their buildings**, so that, as Habakkuk says (ii, 11), 'The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the timber that is between the joints of the building shall answer; woe unto him that buildeth a town with blood'<sup>9</sup>. [They are ambitious, appealing for promotion; but none ever appeals to be left in Mary's quiet and unobtrusive part<sup>10</sup>. The frequency of **exemption from visitation** is bad; to struggle for such exemption is sometimes a mortal sin<sup>11</sup>; such and such a monastery] is not subject to the bishop, but perchance it

<sup>1</sup> Vol. v, fol. 80, 4.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* fol. 81, 4.<sup>3</sup> Vol. iv, fol. 184, 3.<sup>4</sup> Vol. v, fol. 41, 2.<sup>5</sup> Vol. vii, fol. 175, 2.<sup>6</sup> Vol. vi, fol. 143, 3.<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* fol. 153, 2.<sup>8</sup> He has just explained how, when builders have collected their stones in winter, they leave them to dry before building them in; else "the stones drop from the wall, or burst asunder, because they were not seasoned" (vol. vii, fol. 217, 4).<sup>9</sup> Vol. vi, fol. 153, 3.<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* fol. 196, 4.<sup>11</sup> Vol. vii, fol. 83, 3.

is subject, for the greater part, to the Devil<sup>1</sup>. [And, even when it is not exempt:] nowadays, these [Religious] are in great need of the visitation of correction, as saith the Psalmist (*Vulg.* lxxxviii, 33), 'I will visit their iniquities with a rod, and their sin with stripes'; but, alas! **their visitors visit not with a rod to correct but with a tongue to eat; for they come only that they may feast.**" Therefore the monks "**suffer from fleshly vices, a thing human indeed, but grievous...** they are like unto whited sepulchres, which within are full of all filthiness (Matt. xxiii, 27); and, as we read in Ezekiel (viii), the farther the prophet went in to the inner parts of the Temple, the greater were the abominations that he found"<sup>2</sup>. "So long as cloisterers stayed in their cloisters, spending their lives in contemplation and prayer, they had grace in God's sight and in men's; but, going out into public and into frequent cares, they have lost both<sup>3</sup>. [Yet,] if you tell a cloisterer, 'Go not down into Egypt,' that is, into the world, to get help (Jerem. xlii, 14 ff.) they say at once in their hearts if not with their lips: 'The Lord hath not sent you. For God certainly would have us provide for ourselves, and get the friendship of noble folk, that they may help us in time of need'"<sup>4</sup>. For even temporal prosperity, so obtained, is pernicious. "**Clerics and Religious...** abound in riches, delights and honours; they are also **lecherous, proud and avaricious**; and therefore they shall be cast into outer darkness, that is, into hell"<sup>5</sup>. "The cloister should above all things be free from the lion of boastfulness, arrogance, or vainglory, nor should the evil beast of detraction, envy, hate, lechery, or avarice ascend thither.... Yet, nowadays, all these things are found in the Church and in the cloister; and this is because Religion hath deserted holiness, and hath heaped up abundance of worldly goods<sup>6</sup>. [But the end of all this is the loss of that temporal prosperity for the sake of which the Religious has sold his soul. This is implied in Lamentations i, 1, 'How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people!'] That is, the cloister, by reason of the fewness [of inmates].... For, **where of old there were a hundred monks, now there are scarce a score...** In days of old, Religion was mistress of kings and princes and, literally, of nations; [but, now, great folk are more inclined to take away than to add<sup>7</sup>. The fig-tree of Judges ix betokens monasticism, which of old was fruitful and pleasant:] Thus it was of old, when devotion abounded in the cloisters; but now **devotion is withered**, and therefore cloisterers are glad to be promoted<sup>8</sup>. [Again (on Jeremiah xxiv)] when Religious are bad, they are very bad; when they are good, they are very good.... Whereas it is said (Genesis iii) that Adam and Eve made themselves aprons of fig-leaves, to cover their nakedness, so nowadays **many cloak the filthiness of their life under the name and the habit of Religion...** For this is

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iv, fol. 283, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. vi, fol. 116, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. vi, fol. 32, 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* fol. 283, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* fol. 204, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Vol. iv, fol. 261, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Vol. iv, fol. 77, 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* fol. 236, 1.

how cloisterers have lost their sweetness, and are become as a barren fig-tree, having leaves but no fruit; for prelates and doctors of the Church have left the contemplative life and cling to the cares of this world. For nowadays Religion is without figs, but not without leaves, that is, the outward habit"<sup>1</sup>. "The cloisters are full of secular pomp... prelates, even Religious, ride nowadays like counts or knights... the sins which, in their evil life, they had covered by confession, they make plain after their promotion; [**studies are perishing among them,** and] schisms within the Church are sadly multiplied"—*multiplicata sunt nimis*"<sup>2</sup>. "Note that, in our days, those words are fulfilled of John xx, 5; in the sepulchre (which betokeneth the cloister) **nothing is found but [empty] clothes; you will find just so much of the monk as hangeth upon his shoulders.** And therefore, nowadays, St John cometh not into the sepulchre; that is, into the cloister." Again, these are prefigured in 1 Samuel xix, 13: "And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was **an image in the bed,** with a pillow of goats' hair for [David's] bolster." "The messengers sought David (that is, the Religious) who should lie in the bed of contemplation; but they found naught but goatskins (that is, outward signs of penitence and religion; for hair-shirts are wont to be made of goats' hair)"<sup>3</sup>. [Religious ought to be a peculiar people, like the Nazarites or the Levites in Israel;] but nowadays they are mingled among the Gentiles and have learned their works"<sup>4</sup>.

Some other passages are equally significant, but so diffuse that I can only summarize them here. Religious should be at unity; but in the cloister we see injustice and contradiction. Injustice, because

"by day the abbot has his own toadies—*fautores*—to eat in his chamber, and by night they sleep, even as he doth; but the rest, even though they be weak or sickly, eat by day in the refectory and chant at night in choir. [Yet these subjects] lose the fruit of their labours, since they backbite their superiors, hate their equals, and corrupt their inferiors... Certain cloisterers have places for the sale of corn and wool and other commodities, and from these places **'usury and deceit have not departed'** (Ps. liv, 12), **in the literal sense**, as I have said above of worldly folk; for they sell at a dearer price for the sake of delay in time; a thing horrible to relate, but still more horrible to do<sup>5</sup>. [The exemption system is fatal to discipline, all the more, because it enables Religious to plead custom in favour of their relaxations. Hence a terrible change]: The Church and Religion, at first, were princely through their poverty, for they had no lord but God; now they are slaves through their riches. They were as a coal of fire in charity; now they are as ice in torpor and *acedia*. They were as a veil in their mercy; clothing the naked and feeding the hungry; but **now they oppress the poor, and flay the naked with rapine and exactions;**

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iv, fol. 236, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. vii, fol. 20, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. ii, fols. 139, 4 to 140, 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* fol. 50, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Vol. vi, fol. 9, 2.

for clerics and Religious treat their subjects and their men more cruelly than knights and barons do. Formerly they were strict, or narrowed by austerity and rigour; now they are made broad and are delicate in relaxations and delights<sup>1</sup>. [From clerics or cloisterers the Spirit of Life should proceed;] but it is not so; nay, the Spirit of Death proceedeth from them, as in Matthew xv. 19, 'from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies.' **For the whole heart of the Church is corrupt and infected, and therefore is the body sick**, as in Isaiah i, 5, 'The whole head is sick and the whole heart is sad; from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein'<sup>2</sup>. [Religion ought to be a living death;] the Devil ought to be buried among cloisterers; but nowadays the Devil hath risen again among them"<sup>3</sup>. "Note that the fire of lechery or of gluttony 'devours the beautiful places' (Joel i, 19) of cloistered folk"<sup>4</sup>. "Faithfulness is departed from among Religious in many ways," their habit of possessing private property is, in fact, a theft; "outwardly they have what makes men believe in them, but they betray them"<sup>5</sup>. "Nowadays all these things [detraction, envy, hate, lechery, covetousness] are found in the Church and in cloisters; and this is because **Religion hath abandoned holiness, and heaped up an abundance of worldly things**"<sup>6</sup>.

The papal legate in Austria formulated a plain-spoken indictment at the council which he held at Vienna in 1267 (Hartzheim, *Concilia Germaniae*, vol. III, p. 635, cap. xiii):

"Moreover, seeing that an insistent protest—*clamorosa insinuat*—has fallen upon my ears and mind, to the effect that the abbots and monks of the Order of St Benedict, in very many places, have rashly receded from the observation of the holy Rule and **are leading a very dissolute life, to the peril of their own souls and the scandal of very many folk**; we therefore, wishing to apply a salutary remedy to this corruption" [do hereby commission all the bishops of the province of Salzburg, and the bishop of Prague, with two Cistercian abbots, to make a general visitation, with the exception of the exempt houses, which the legate himself will visit].

In 1268 the papal legate Othobon held a reforming council in London, because the statutes of his predecessor Otho "we found to have been observed in some cases by few men, and in others by none at all." Coming to the Benedictines, he thus explains the reason for his sixteen chapters of reform:

"Because **this holy Religion**, having loosed certain knots of constancy, **hath slid into luxury, and gone miserably aside into the broad way that leadeth unto death**"<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, fol. 206, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. III, fol. 32, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. V, fol. 123, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* fol. 180, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Vol. VII, fol. 28, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Vol. IV, fol. 77, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. II, p. 15; Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, app. p. 142. The grammar in both texts seems faulty, but the sense is plain enough.



Roger Bacon needs no introduction; I need only point out that his *Compendium of the Study of Philosophy*, from which this is taken, was written under papal encouragement in 1271 (*Opp. Med. R.S.* p. 399).

**"Let us look at the Religious; I make exception for no Order. Let us see how each is fallen from its proper estate; and the new Orders [of friars] are now horribly fallen from their original dignity. The whole clergy is bent upon pride, lechery, and covetousness. . . . Certainly, if men had such faith and reverence and devotion to this Sacrament [of the Eucharist] as they ought and are bound to have, then they would not corrupt themselves with so many errors and vices and wickednesses, but would know all wisdom and all saving truth in this life."**

Ludovicus was a German, probably Saxon, Minorite who wrote a book of sermons about 1290. I quote from A. Franz, *Drei deutsche Minoritenprediger*, Freiburg i/B, 1907, pp. 61, 63, 69, 92.

Speaking of "the state of Religious, both men and women," he says, **"very many of these** lie outside on the earth and fall by the hidden sword [of the spirit]. I speak not of all, by reason of the holy and good [among them]; but they **lie outside through concupiscence**, on the earth by avarice, and they now fall or shall fall by the sword by reason of the schism which is already in part, and will shortly be altogether, and by the heresies which will enter in secret." In another place, speaking of those classes of society, "wherein there are few who do not confound the Church. . . especially, in general, by the **avarice and excessive lechery** that is in the world," he names Religious among the rest. And again, he represents Balaam as coming at the head of a procession "with all evil Religious; for some (and, alas! **very many**) have been cast down by their avarice, others by disobedience, others by evil concupiscence; for upon these three every Religious Order is founded. Alas! how many Religious follow this [Balaam] in judgements. We read of him that not he, but his ass, saw the angel. O, how evil are the Religious who in their own way are duller—*rudiores*—than asses; here they follow Balaam, and with Balaam they shall be damned." Then, in another sermon: "And now, in our own days, there hath come [upon the world] that he-goat from the West (Dan. viii, 5), which is a stinking and fetid beast, that is, stinking and fetid life, and hath subdued the whole world. And he is come up to the ram (that is, against good life in the Church), and hath broken his two horns (that is, the double charity [of the Church]) and hath stamped upon him, and now he hath subdued unto himself many church folk, both men and women, both Religious and Seculars. And [as saith Daniel] none could deliver the ram out of his hand; the Friars Minor and Preachers did indeed seek to deliver him, but **with all their preaching they cannot restore the Church to her good estate; nor can the Grey Monks nor the Black.** Alas! the walls of the Church are now bending to ruin, so that she can scarce be restored by any man; she is become as an old garment, which when we patch it

in one place is rent in another. The first foot of the goat, which stamps down many in the Church, is lukewarmness. For men are become so lukewarm in love of God that methinks that time must be come which God foretold in the Gospel: *Because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold*: to wit, that charity which, in the early Church, so inflamed men that they tortured themselves. This is grown so cold that now there are few who will hear sermons or go to Mass or give alms. This is the foot which stampeth down both knight and peasant, merchant and clerk, and (lamentable to say) **the Religious are stamped down, who, when they grow lukewarm, become worse than all the rest.**"

A few years later (about 1310) come the sermons of another German Minorite, "Greculus." He quotes, with implied approval, the well-known answer sometimes attributed to Richard I of England (*ibid.* p. 124).

"A certain Religious rebuked a certain king for greed, lechery and pride. The king made answer: 'Brother, ye have married [*sic*] my worst daughters; but they have already been married; for the Cistercians have my greed to wife, the Templars my pride, and **the Black Monks my lechery.**'"

St Gertrude, sister to St Mechtildis, was made abbess of a Benedictine convent in 1294. I quote from p. 28 of her *Life and Revelations*, printed in 1662 and edited by Dom Canteleu.

"One day the Lord Jesus appeared to her, fairer to see than all the sons of men; and He seemed to support with His shoulders a great and ample building which leaned upon Him. Then he spake thus to His chosen servant: 'Seest thou with what labour and care and vigilance I support this house that I love, the house of Religion? For **this is now tottering to ruin—*ad ruinam declinat*—almost throughout the whole world**, because so few are to be found in the world who will either work or suffer faithfully to protect her or to promote her; wherefore, O beloved, it behoveth thee to have compassion upon my weariness.'"

A statute of 35 Ed. I complains of the sums raised from alien priories in England by their superior houses in France, so that

"divine service and the sustentation of the poor and sick and infirm is withdrawn, while the soul's health of the living and the souls of the dead are miserably defrauded, **and hospitality, almsgiving and other works of charity cease**; so that what had been paid of old for pious uses and the increase of divine service is now turned to a reprobate sense, wherefore (apart from these things afore rehearsed) **no little scandal groweth among the people.**"

Pierre Dubois, one of the most remarkable publicists of the Middle Ages, was royal advocate at Coutances under Philippe le Bel. I quote from his *Plea for the Recovery of the Holy Land*, written in 1307 (§§ 30 and 102; ed. Langlois, pp. 24, 82). He calls upon the pope to "consider" what (he implies) is notorious, that a large proportion—*ut in pluribus*—of Benedictine monks amass private property, to the risk of their souls.

"Among these monks those are thought most prudent who have most in their money-chests, contrary to their professed vow. These Religious have, outside their abbeys, many non-conventual priories, richly endowed for two or three monks. That which remaineth over from what is spent upon food and raiment, although it be due to Christ's poor, is hoarded by the priors of such outer houses for law-suits against their abbots or for other misdeeds, and at least it counter-balances all their other works, even their prayers; for, whensoever they hoard, they as it were break their vow, and they seldom or never make amends. Moreover, **in such priories the monks oftentimes—plerumque—live in lechery, drunkenness and other dishonesties**; and sometimes in Burgundy the sons of nobles become monks in order to get such priories, in order that they may live upon their revenues not only delicately but even in lechery; and even at the universities, as he [the writer] hath heard in many cases, and as he believeth the pope to know well, at the times and places of his own studies. **The abbots and superiors of the said Order are frequently negligent to punish such sinners**, fearing sometimes, if they corrected them, to fall into quarrels and discords, which they ought not to fear. Moreover, many young monks are quarrelsome, and deliberately, in the cloisters, in order that they may be sent to such priories, for the sake of wandering abroad and wantonness." Of the Benedictine nuns he complains especially that they break the law of simony by exacting dowries "and electing abbesses and prioresses by illicit conventions, **and committing many crimes—*plura delicta*—both natural and sometimes unnatural**." Neither men's nor women's houses are sufficiently disciplined to be really safe for any but strong natures: "Wherefore, considering the common frailty of folk in our own day, especially of the female sex, we ought to choose the safer course [of not taking the vows]... **What prudent and experienced man who had children would care to tempt them under such penalties and such peril?**"<sup>1</sup>

The Cluniac General Chapter statutes of 1310 insist that no monk shall be received into the Order without leave from the abbot-general at Cluny, and adopt in explanation a most significant reason first given two centuries earlier:

"Because, as testified by Abbot Peter the Venerable [c. 1130], this statute was caused by the indiscreet and most frequent reception of unprofitable persons, throughout almost all the Cluniac monasteries. By which indiscreet reception, now of children, now of peasants [or villeins, *rusticorum*], now of fools and persons useful for no work, things had come to such a pass that **such persons constituted almost the majority in the Order**, and unspeakable evils committed by them came almost constantly to our ears from divers parts of the earth"<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *De Recuperatione*, §§ 30-1, 102; pp. 24, 83-5.

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Guillaume le Maire, bishop of Angers, one of the most efficient of French prelates, was invited to set his ideas of reform in writing before the Ecumenical Council of Vienne (1311). The bishop of Olmütz, in a similar memorial to the General Council of 1274, had laid stress on the irregularities of irregularly-constituted Orders<sup>1</sup>; but this bishop of Angers, with the experience of one generation more, attacked the older Orders directly<sup>2</sup>. Though, proverbially, the monk out of his cloister is a fish out of water, yet "alas! **many** who bear only the monastic name and habit, having nothing of true monastic life in themselves, caring rather to die with the world than to live with Christ, choose rather to dwell by twos and threes in rural priories and elsewhere, than in the main congregation of their monastery. These dwellers without the cloister, like unbridled horses, cast wholly aside their divine service and the observance of their Rule and wander through markets and fairs, buying and selling like lay traders, and **blush not to commit many other grievous sins—enormia—whereof it is shameful and base to speak**, in detestation of their Order and the **grievous scandal** of the people." The exempt monks, again, commit "**other enormous iniquities, whereof I must not speak**" (p. 480).

Guillaume Durand was another of the prelates invited to lay his opinions before the Council. His memorial has more than once been printed; I quote from the Paris edition of 1671, *De modo generalis concilii habendi*, p. 166 (pars II, tit. 53). This whole chapter is a rehearsal of those time-honoured decrees, incorporated in canon law, which are now (he complains) most neglected. He reminds the Fathers at Vienne how the Council of Agde (c. 38) had decreed that monks should not wander abroad, and that persistent offenders should be flogged. He continues:

"And this is not kept, mainly because they wander about more than other folk, in defiance of the regular discipline of their Order; and many of them breed dissensions and quarrels and scandal everywhere, contrary to the state and duty of their condition. . . it would seem that we ought to provide against this, and against their other irregularities—*dissolutionibus*. For, as St Augustine wrote to Vincentius the Donatist, from the time when he began to serve God he had seldom met with better men than those who lived profitably in monasteries, and had met with none worse than those who failed in monasteries (as we find in Gratian's *Decretum*, pars I, dist. 47, c. 9). **Ought not their life and conversation to be better than other men's?** . . . Let the monk sit in solitude and silence, . . . let him know his own name, for the Greek *monos* is in Latin *unus*, and *achos* in Greek is *tristis* in Latin; therefore his name signifieth *the sad solitary*, that he may sit in sadness and busy himself with his service. [Here follow two pages of conciliar decrees against wandering monks, or those who usurp parochial functions.] For, as Augustine writeth, it is a most unworthy injustice to the clerical order, if those who desert their cloister are enrolled in

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the clerical army, for an evil monk cannot be a good cleric; nay, sometimes even a good monk scarcely makes a good cleric. For, if he be of sufficient continence, perchance he lacks the necessary instruction, or the integrity of a regular person<sup>1</sup>. . . . Moreover, he ought never to put off the habit of the Order which he has professed. . . . St Gregory saith that no monk is permitted to take or even taste flesh. . . . He ought always to be **doing some work**, lest the devil ever find him unoccupied, [as we see from the Apostles and the early monks of Egypt, who worked] not so much for the necessities of life as for their soul's health, lest they should wander in pernicious thoughts, and live like fornicating Israel prostituting herself to everyone that passed by (Ezekiel xvi, 25 and Gratian, pars III, dist. v, cc. 31, 32). . . . They should not possess private property in any way; else should they be dragged [at death] to the dung heap. If they go to lectures on [natural] philosophy or law, they are excommunicated (by decree of Alex. III, *Decret. Greg.* l. III, tit. i, c. 3). . . . [It is decreed] that abbots, for humility of Religion, should be subject to the bishops, who should correct and visit them if they do anything irregular. . . . and that monks who swear together and conspire against bishops or others should be degraded. They are forbidden to dwell alone in priories. . . . Farther, since they have gone back (as we grieve to say) from many of the aforesaid decrees pertaining to their state and office and that of other Religious, concerning which there are many other prescriptions in Canon Law ([as is rehearsed by Alex. III in] *Decret. Greg.* l. III, tit. xxxv, c. 3), and since (as is written in that hymn *Jesus Salvator Seculi*) **the Monastic Order now lieth almost prostrate—*jam pene lapsus sit***, it would seem needful to make a reformation of the aforesaid matters and of others pertaining to monastic duties which are specially violated. And that they should never go about the world except by twos and twos, nor a young monk with a young, but with an elder, and by licence of their superior. And that they should nowhere live in the houses of secular folk, nor in priories without sufficient congregation, whether within or without the universities. . . . It would also seem profitable that all Religious of the same province should have one superior of their Order, by whom they should be visited and corrected every year; for there are some priories whose heads and correctors and visitors live outside their provinces, and these men do not visit or correct; therefore **they transgress with impunity.**"

Ubertino da Casale was the leader of the Spiritual Franciscans; see Dante, *Parad.* XII, 124. He testified before the Council of Vienne, in 1311, concerning his own Franciscan Order:

**"So great hath been the flood of idleness and gluttony and continual familiarities with women, that I marvel more at**

<sup>1</sup> This again is in Gratian (pars II, caus. xvi, q. 1, c. 36), where the gloss adds: "It is enough that a monk should only be good, even though he be illiterate or *irregularis*, which two things are obstacles to the promotion of clerics." I omit most of the references to Canon Law.

**those who stand than at those who fall...** There seemeth as much difference between the state of our Order in those days when I first entered, and the present, as there is between a sound and fair man and a plague-patient"—*quantum sani et pulcri hominis ad infectum*<sup>1</sup>.

Benvenuto da Imola, [1331]–[1380], studied in Florence under Boccaccio; in 1365 he was one of the five ambassadors from Imola to the pope; about ten years later, we find him as professor at Bologna, and lecturing publicly on Dante. He wrote in considerable detail, and is by far the most interesting to the social historian of all the early commentators; Muratori published long extracts in his great collection of Italian historians. My quotations are translated from vol. v of the only complete edition, by Lacaita (Florence, 1887); I have sometimes abridged. On pp. 301 ff. the author comments on *Parad.* xxii, 72 ff.

*"But to mount.* Here St Benedict turneth aside to rebuke **the cloistered monks of this present day**, who climb not that holy ladder; nay, who **are wholly immersed in the love of earthly things**. Therefore he saith *none lifts his foot from earth*, that is, from earthly affections, *to mount it*, that is, Jacob's ladder, which to them seemeth too lofty. **But note that the poet seemeth here to speak too broadly; for even now there are many monks living very holy<sup>2</sup> lives, to all appearance, as I have seen myself in some places; for example, among the brethren of Monte Oliveto.** We must say briefly that Benedict speaketh of these monks in comparison with the contemplative brethren [of early days]; or perchance it is better to say that these words should be restricted, and referred only to the monastery of Monte Cassino, whereof the poet speaketh here in especial, and which in very truth is most abandoned and desolate, as shall be said presently. Therefore he saith *and my Rule*, etc.; that is, it is in writing but not in practice, vainly and fruitlessly cumbering the leaves of paper, since it is not kept. And here, for the clearer understanding of this text, I will tell a merry tale which my master Boccaccio of Certaldo was wont to tell me. He said that, when he was in Apulia, he was enticed by the fame of that spot to visit the noble monastery of Monte Cassino, whereof the poet hath spoken [above]. And, being eager to see the library, of whose magnificence he had heard, he humbly besought one of the monks (as one who was most courteous of manner) that he would do him the favour of opening this library to him. The monk answered roughly, showing him a lofty flight of stairs, 'Go up, for it is open.' He, climbing gladly, found this treasure-chamber without door or key; and, coming in, he saw the grass growing in through the windows, and the books and their shelves lying deep in dust. Amazed at this sight,

<sup>1</sup> A.L.K.G. vol. III, pp. 77, 79.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *holy enough*; *satis* bears both senses in medieval Latin. The Benedictine congregation of Monte Oliveto was founded in 1319 by the Blessed Bernardo Tolomei, who lived until 1348. It was therefore almost in its first fervour when Benvenuto wrote.



the clerical army, for an evil monk cannot be a good cleric; nay, sometimes even a good monk scarcely makes a good cleric. For, if he be of sufficient continence, perchance he lacks the necessary instruction, or the integrity of a regular person<sup>1</sup>. . . . Moreover, he ought never to put off the habit of the Order which he has professed. . . . St Gregory saith that no monk is permitted to take or even taste flesh. . . . He ought always to be **doing some work**, lest the devil ever find him unoccupied, [as we see from the Apostles and the early monks of Egypt, who worked] not so much for the necessities of life as for their soul's health, lest they should wander in pernicious thoughts, and live like fornicating Israel prostituting herself to everyone that passed by (Ezekiel xvi, 25 and Gratian, pars III, dist. v, cc. 31, 32). . . . They should not possess private property in any way; else should they be dragged [at death] to the dung heap. If they go to lectures on [natural] philosophy or law, they are excommunicated (by decree of Alex. III, *Decret. Greg.* l. III, tit. i, c. 3). . . . [It is decreed] that abbots, for humility of Religion, should be subject to the bishops, who should correct and visit them if they do anything irregular. . . . and that monks who swear together and conspire against bishops or others should be degraded. They are forbidden to dwell alone in priories. . . . Farther, since they have gone back (as we grieve to say) from many of the aforesaid decrees pertaining to their state and office and that of other Religious, concerning which there are many other prescriptions in Canon Law ([as is rehearsed by Alex. III in] *Decret. Greg.* l. III, tit. xxxv, c. 3), and since (as is written in that hymn *Jesu Salvator Seculi*) **the Monastic Order now lieth almost prostrate—*jam pene lapsus sit***, it would seem needful to make a reformation of the aforesaid matters and of others pertaining to monastic duties which are specially violated. And that they should never go about the world except by twos and twos, nor a young monk with a young, but with an elder, and by licence of their superior. And that they should nowhere live in the houses of secular folk, nor in priories without sufficient congregation, whether within or without the universities. . . . It would also seem profitable that all Religious of the same province should have one superior of their Order, by whom they should be visited and corrected every year; for there are some priories whose heads and correctors and visitors live outside their provinces, and these men do not visit or correct; therefore **they transgress with impunity.**"

Ubertino da Casale was the leader of the Spiritual Franciscans; see Dante, *Parad.* XII, 124. He testified before the Council of Vienne, in 1311, concerning his own Franciscan Order:

**"So great hath been the flood of idleness and gluttony and continual familiarities with women, that I marvel more at**

<sup>1</sup> This again is in Gratian (pars II, caus. xvi, q. 1, c. 36), where the gloss adds: "It is enough that a monk should only be good, even though he be illiterate or *irregularis*, which two things are obstacles to the promotion of clerics." I omit most of the references to Canon Law.

**those who stand than at those who fall....** There seemeth as much difference between the state of our Order in those days when I first entered, and the present, as there is between a sound and fair man and a plague-patient"—*quantum sani et pulcri hominis ad infectum*<sup>1</sup>.

Benvenuto da Imola, [1331]–[1380], studied in Florence under Boccaccio; in 1365 he was one of the five ambassadors from Imola to the pope; about ten years later, we find him as professor at Bologna, and lecturing publicly on Dante. He wrote in considerable detail, and is by far the most interesting to the social historian of all the early commentators; Muratori published long extracts in his great collection of Italian historians. My quotations are translated from vol. v of the only complete edition, by Lacaita (Florence, 1887); I have sometimes abridged. On pp. 301 ff. the author comments on *Parad.* xxii, 72 ff.

*"But to mount.* Here St Benedict turneth aside to rebuke the **cloistered monks of this present day**, who climb not that holy ladder; nay, who **are wholly immersed in the love of earthly things**. Therefore he saith *none lifts his foot from earth*, that is, from earthly affections, *to mount it*, that is, Jacob's ladder, which to them seemeth too lofty. **But note that the poet seemeth here to speak too broadly; for even now there are many monks living very holy<sup>2</sup> lives, to all appearance, as I have seen myself in some places; for example, among the brethren of Monte Oliveto.** We must say briefly that Benedict speaketh of these monks in comparison with the contemplative brethren [of early days]; or perchance it is better to say that these words should be restricted, and referred only to the monastery of Monte Cassino, whereof the poet speaketh here in especial, and which in very truth is most abandoned and desolate, as shall be said presently. Therefore he saith *and my Rule*, etc.; that is, it is in writing but not in practice, vainly and fruitlessly cumbering the leaves of paper, since it is not kept. And here, for the clearer understanding of this text, I will tell a merry tale which my master Boccaccio of Certaldo was wont to tell me. He said that, when he was in Apulia, he was enticed by the fame of that spot to visit the noble monastery of Monte Cassino, whereof the poet hath spoken [above]. And, being eager to see the library, of whose magnificence he had heard, he humbly besought one of the monks (as one who was most courteous of manner) that he would do him the favour of opening this library to him. The monk answered roughly, showing him a lofty flight of stairs, 'Go up, for it is open.' He, climbing gladly, found this treasure-chamber without door or key; and, coming in, he saw the grass growing in through the windows, and the books and their shelves lying deep in dust. Amazed at this sight,

<sup>1</sup> A.L.K.G. vol. III, pp. 77, 79.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *holy enough*; *satis* bears both senses in medieval Latin. The Benedictine congregation of Monte Oliveto was founded in 1319 by the Blessed Bernardo Tolomei, who lived until 1348. It was therefore almost in its first fervour when Benvenuto wrote.

he began to open the books and turn their leaves, first one and then another; among which he found many and various volumes of strange and ancient writings, some of which had had whole quires torn out, others had their margins pared to the quick, with manifold mutilations of the same sort. At length he departed with lamentations and tears, for the pity of these famous men whose laborious works had come into the hands of such a worthless crew. Traversing the cloister, he met a monk, from whom he asked wherefore these priceless books had been thus foully mutilated. The other answered that some of the monks, wishing to gain two shillings here, or five there, were wont to tear out a quire, scrape it, and make therefrom little psalm-books which they sold to schoolboys<sup>1</sup>; and in the same way they cut off the margins to make gospel-texts, and briefs which they sold to women<sup>2</sup>. Let studious folk now rack their brains to write books!

"*The walls, etc.* Here St Benedict, to prove his complaint against those monks, describes their change and decay; the abbey and the consecrated church and the house of prayer are made a den of thieves; and the monk's cowl and frock are filled not with holy virtues, as of old, but with grievous vices; for they are enriched and grown fat with the church goods.

"*Foul usury, etc.* Here he doth express his detestation of those *praelati*<sup>3</sup> who plunder the goods of the church, saying briefly that even the most grievous usury doth not so offend God as doth the undue retention and spending of a monastery's goods... for the fruit of such speculation bringeth forth irregularity of life—*dissolutionem vitae*—among the monks.

"*For, etc.* Here St Benedict giveth proof of his accusation that monks and priests who do thus are thieves. Wherefore he saith *all pertains, etc.*, since whatsoever remaineth over from the sober and temperate livelihood of the monks belongeth to the poor; and he addeth *not to kindred*, as a rebuke to those *praelati*<sup>3</sup> who bear too great carnal affection to their kinsfolk; wherein they certainly follow not Christ, whose successors they are. For Christ made all his kinsfolk into saints; but the pastors of our own day make rich folk of all their kin. For they are like those engines of war which cast pebbles afar, but great stones to a short distance; thus do the *praelati* of our day give little benefices to strangers, and great benefices to their own kinsfolk; and Dante addeth *more vile allowance*; that is, **harlots and hounds and hawks** and such things which they keep for their own fleshly delight. *Mortal flesh*; here he bringeth his words to **one general**

<sup>1</sup> Grammar-school boys commonly began on the psalter after their ABC. The *prymmer* from which the little boy learned in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* consisted mainly of psalms; and *psalterium docere* is a common phrase for elementary teaching; see for instance my *From St Francis to Dante*, 2nd ed. p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> For purposes of divination or witchcraft, see Ducange, s.v. *breve* and *sortes sanctorum*.

<sup>3</sup> Almost any Superior, in medieval Latin, may be called *praelatus*

**conclusion, which is true of all Religious Orders and Rules in the world; viz. that they begin well, but do not long persevere.** And he describeth the three best Rules in their beginning, their change, and their perversion; since the successors of St Peter Damiani have grown from poor to rich, **and the Benedictines from contemplative to voluptuous**, and the Franciscans from humble to proud. *Jordan, etc.*; here St Benedict foretelleth vengeance to come upon these backslidings aforesaid; and his words are as much as to say that God hath wrought greater miracles than such punishment would be, **however long His vengeance may seem to be deferred.** In other words, these miracles [rehearsed by Dante] are more wonderful than it would be to see God's help come in here for the punishment of these perverse cloister-folk in the aforesaid monasteries of Saints Peter, Benedict and Francis"<sup>1</sup>.

Dante's own son Pietro, whose comments are always very brief, has little to say but that Alexander III had already noted monastic decay in his decretal addressed to the Cistercian abbot and monks<sup>2</sup>. The Pisan professor, Francesco Buti (1324-1406), comments at great length<sup>3</sup>.

"[St Benedict] laments that his monks now on earth do not follow his Rule...and bewails his brethren's deviation from their ancient virtuous contemplative life...**The monasteries which used to be abbeys**, that is, places where spiritual fathers and sons strive to serve God, **are become haunts of robbers and malefactors**...for, in these days and times of ours, monks are there only to steal the fruits of the abbeys, and to become abbots and dispose of the monastery goods after their own fashion...as to their cowls, they are full of evil thoughts and ill-will." Their self-indulgence and worldliness are worse than usury; "and Dante giveth the cause why it is worse; **for they take [these revenues] away from God's poor**, since all that is left over when the monks' needs have been satisfied should be distributed for God's sake among the poor...not among the monks' or the abbot's kinsfolk, nor **among harlots or dissolute folk**, but among poor beggars, for God's sake. He then sheweth the root whence proceedeth this change of the monks from all virtue and sanctity to such wantonness and disorder; and he saith that all cometh from the corruption of the flesh...My monks [saith St Benedict] wish to eat well and drink well and dwell in worldly pleasures, and the Friars Minor are become proud and hypocritical...The prelates, monks, and friars are so changed from their first beginnings, that they may truly be said to have turned back like Jordan; [and, for reform, we must hope for some such miracle as that of the Red Sea.] Whereby St Benedict brought Dante into good hope that God will bring a remedy at His own good will."

<sup>1</sup> For the Order of Pietro Peccatore, probably founded by St Peter Damiani, see P. Toynbee, *Dante Dictionary*, p. 187, and my *From St Francis to Dante*, 2nd ed. p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Petri Allegherii Commentarium*, Florence, 1846, p. 690.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. Giannini, Pisa, 1862, vol. III, pp. 613 ff.

Compare Benvenuto's comments on the Dominicans (p. 67; *Parad.* xi, 118), and the Franciscans (p. 84; *Parad.* xii, 118).

"Here St Thomas takes occasion to reprehend his brethren who follow not rightly after Dominic their shepherd. *But hunger of new viands tempts the flock*; this may be taken literally, in its simple sense, viz. that **the Friars Preachers** were wont to be well fattened in things spiritual, **and seek now to be fattened in body, being greedy of new viands, that is, of flesh-meats, which are forbidden by their Rule**; for human nature striveth after forbidden things. Or it may be understood allegorically, interpreting these *new viands* as the prelacies, dignities, honours and so forth, whereunto they seek. The saint sheweth that **there are yet some good brethren in his Order, but very few.**"

"Here doth St Bonaventura rebuke the brethren of St Francis's Order, saying that they have left the footsteps of St Francis and of the other earlier holy brethren. Among the first brethren was a virtue truly solid, delectable and good, preserving and saving men's souls; **but in the friars of our day is viciousness, lewd and bitter and ill-famed and evil, that weakeneth and debaseth every soul**, however wholesome and good it may be by nature. Then he goeth on to expound his saying still farther, saying that this family of Friars Minor, who are multitudinous in number, began by following truly in St Francis's steps, but are now changed. As they grew in number, so also in a new spirit, so that the first and ancient brethren were the very opposite of these their modern successors; for those were poor, these are rich; those were humble, these are proud; those were lean, these are fat, and so on. Wherefore St Bonaventura, considering the life of his brethren of later times, foretelleth their early decay. And note here that our Dante showed himself most far-sighted, conjecturing their last state from that which he saw in his own day. **For in very truth those two most excellent Orders of Friars Preachers and Minors, who were once the two brightest lights of this world, are now under grievous eclipse, and are sinking towards the horizon.** For they suffer plainly from civil wars and intestinal discord; wherefore it would seem that they will not last long; and that Benedictine monk spake well who, when a Friar Minor rebuked him for his wantonness [*lascivia*], answered and said, 'When thy Francis shall be as old as our Benedict, then mayest thou speak to me'. **Yet doth St Bonaventura except a few of his brethren** from this debasement; for such keep the Rule well, and the Order is maintained by their merits."

In 1330-1, the Cluniac authorities besought Edward III to interfere for the reform of the houses of that Order in England. They complained that **"the monasteries are ill-governed both spiritually and temporally, to the great dishonour of our lord the king, and to the great**

<sup>1</sup> Bromyard, writing at the same time, tells the same anecdote (*Sum. Pred. Religio*).

damage of the monks and of the Cluniac Order. *First*, to the great damage of our lord the king, and to the disinheritance of his ancestors<sup>1</sup> who founded these houses, in places where there should be 30 or 40 monks there is **no more than the third of that number**, and especially at Montacute and Bermondsey; wherefore, from the revenues intended for the sustenance of monks, they give great bribes to maintain their error, and bear away goods outside the realm, to the king's dishonour and the great damage of the houses and the monks. The *second* evil is, that they are **visited neither by bishop nor by archbishop**, and by no man of this nation or realm, to the great damage of the said houses and their monks. The *third*, that there is no election, which is contrary to the Rule of St Benedict... The *fourth*, that if any monk speak of the Order or of Religion, he shall be sent [to some cell] a hundred leagues away, and on foot, and with little money for his journey; wherefore the Order of Cluny is come to shame, and **no man dareth to speak of Religion.**" [*Fifthly*, there are scarcely any who have really taken the final vow (which the abbot of Cluny alone could receive) and, *sixthly*, the French and the English are always quarrelling. We must bear in mind, of course, that the Hundred Years' War had now begun, and had done much to complicate the already difficult conditions of an Order whose executive was far away over the sea; but these difficulties rather increased than diminished in the succeeding century.]

Ludolph of Saxony was a learned Dominican who migrated into the Carthusian Order and wrote about 1330; his *Vita Christi* was extremely popular and has been printed very frequently, even down to quite modern times. I translate from pt I, chs. 14, 79; pt II, ch. 18; pt III, ch. 83 (pp. 68, 329, 440, 489 of the edition published at Augsburg in 1729).

"But, alas! there are few Religious nowadays who go from good to better, and go up from strength to strength: wherefore St Bernard saith: 'You will far more easily find many secular folk converted to good, than one Religious go on to better... Thou must go either up or down; if thou seek to stand, thou must needs fall.'" And, expounding Luke xiii, 6: "This fig-tree may be moralized as Religion, which *the Lord Christ* who keepeth it *had planted in his vineyard*, to wit, in the Church, through St Antony, St Benedict, and St Austin, *and came seeking fruit on it*, that is, fruit of religion and holiness, namely, profit in that Religion, *and found none*, but only leaves; **nothing of true Religion, but words and outward habit.** *And he said to the dresser of the vineyard* (the multitude of prelates and doctors whose duty it is to prune the shoots and uproot the thorns and so forth): *Behold, for these three years*, that is, in the times of Antony, Benedict, and Austin, *I come seeking fruit*, of virtues and works, *and I find none*; for the tree was too nigh unto the road and the world, and therefore it could not keep fruit to final ripeness. But indeed every Religious is afraid when the word is uttered here: *Cut it down therefore*, that is,

<sup>1</sup> The reading *ministes* seems an obvious scribal error for *auncestres*.

**decree its cutting-down as unfruitful; why cumbereth it the ground?** and useth temporal goods; for it earneth not by good works the place which it holdeth; for, as Austin saith, the sinner is not worthy of the bread which he eateth. *But he answering* (that is, the prelate; for such ought to put themselves in defence of their subjects) *said* (in prayer for them) *Lord, let it alone this year also*, that it may repent and bear fruit. . . . Yet there are many who will not repent even thus, but murmur against those who remind them of the abomination of their sins, whether by preaching or lecturing or rebuking or accusing; and therefore **we must fear that they will be cut down**; for *the tree which beareth not good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire*. Moreover, these three years may signify the Three Vows common to all Religious Orders, whereof the Lord will ask most exactly how they have been kept; but **many have reason to fear that these vows will be found broken or ill-kept.**" And, lastly; "Consider how many there be today, even of those who bear the habit of Religious, who imitate the Jews and fear to lose worldly goods, caring not for everlasting goods, so that they deservedly lose both. For there are many—*plerique*—even Religious, who, sometimes acquiring temporal goods unjustly and by crooked means, or possessing them when thus gained, fear to lose them, yet dread not to lose eternity on this account. And, because now they, like the Jews, love inward darkness, the darkness of guilt, therefore both together shall be cast into outward darkness, to wit, into hell." [In part II, chapter 83, there is a long passage in praise of monastic life; but it is only brought out as a quotation from Chrysostom, and Ludolph makes no attempt to apply it directly to the conditions of his own day.]

The biographer of Benedict XII writes:

"This pope, piously considering that **very many—*quam multi*—Religious**, either through insolence or through sloth, **were neglecting the statutes of the holy fathers and the Rules of their own Order** . . . looked closely into the Cistercian and Benedictine Orders, to reform them from this negligence aforesaid. . . . And, if death, as it pleased God, had not prevented him, it is thought that he would similarly have reformed, with his just file of judgement, the other Orders of Mendicants, which by negligence were deformed in many ways. . . . He reduced to due observance the holy Order of St Benedict, **which was in many respects almost ruined**"—*in multis quasi collapsum*<sup>1</sup>.

This should be read in the light of the bull of Clement VI in 1343, where he rehearses **how generally the reforming statutes of his predecessor Benedict XII had been violated**, and meets the difficulty by proclaiming a general absolution from the excommunications and other penalties thereby incurred; in other words, by **emasculating** the whole of his predecessor's reforms<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Baluze, *Vit. Pap. Aren.* 1693, vol. I, p. 218; compare p. 389.

<sup>2</sup> *Reg. Rad. Salop.* p. 475; the editor, by a slip, ascribes this to Clement VII.

Ranulf Higden, a monk of Chester, wrote his *Polychronicon* between 1327 and 1342. It is a mere compilation, except for a few original statements and comments, one of which I here quote from Trevisa's translation of about 1400 (R.S. vol. VI, p. 345). Higden has related Edwold's death and burial; and he adds:

"The abbey that was there builded [at Cerne] was afterwards rich enow, if they that should govern it deal it to God's servants and not to gluttons<sup>1</sup>. But in our time covetousness and pride hath so changed all things in England, that things that were given freely to abbeys in old time **be now more wasted in gluttony and outrage** [*i.e.* riot] **of owners than in sustenance and help of needy men and of guests**. But certainly the givers shall not lose their meed; for their will and their intent is weighed in God's balance."

John of Ayton [de Athona] was a distinguished canon lawyer at Cambridge who wrote between 1333 and 1348. His commentaries, printed at the end of the 1679 edition of Lyndwood's *Provinciale*, are even more valuable for social history than Lyndwood's own. In the following passage (p. 141) he is commenting on the legate Othobon's complaint, in 1268, that the Orders were backsliding into the way of death. He writes:

"What then shall we say of the monks of our days, who are said to keep in few respects that Rule of St Benedict which at the time of their profession they solemnly vowed to the Lord that they would keep; nay rather, they daily and expressly gainsay that Rule, not without calumnious opposition, and also the canons and traditions of the holy fathers; as appears in their neglecting to recite the canons (as noted here below), and in their receiving money wherewith to buy shoes and other necessities. [Then after describing their flesh-eating and delicate food, the corrodies that they sold, the scandal of accounts not kept and audited, he concludes:] And, to be brief, in many other ways **(we might almost say, on every other point) they spurn the narrow way of the Rule that leadeth to life**, and hasten to turn aside into that broad and easy way which leadeth to miserable death. [They would have done better never to take the vows; nor, again, is it any moral excuse to urge that these relaxations have now become customary; the plea that the abbot has a right to license shoe-money is false in law.] I know, therefore, no remedy but this, that the older monks should amend the sins of the younger. . . . Otherwise, by reason of their hazard of salvation, **since neither the restrictions of the Rule nor the coercion of canon law nor the reverence of God have brought any remedy or amendment, we must sore fear the overthrow of this great Religion**, so that the Lord, by reason of their obstinate dishonesty—*improbitatem*—will let his vineyard to other husbandmen to till. . . . It is right that he who neither does the work nor executes the thing should lose even the name. . . . God knows (for He seeth all) that I have not written this in detraction of holy Religion, but for the sake of reconciling the building up of Regular modesty."

<sup>1</sup> Higden's word is *nebulonibus*, "worthless fellows," "scoundrels."



The official catalogue describes Brit. Mus. MS. Roy. 6, E. vi as the first volume of "*Omne Bonum*, a voluminous encyclopaedia of canon law, theology and general information, compiled in the middle of the fourteenth century by Jacobus, an Englishman, who refuses to declare his cognomen. He was probably a Cistercian (art. *abbas*) and certainly a vehement antagonist of the mendicant orders." I translate from fol. 352 a:

"Concerning the monks' faults we must say, *First*, let them beware lest they conspire against the abbot who would correct them, which they **often presume to do**, and depose him and then strive to elect another who will have no power.... *Thirdly*, that they have so great **familiarity with women**, whom they make their gossips against the law<sup>1</sup>. *Fourthly*, that they associate incautiously with women, and **especially with nuns**.... *Fifthly*, that they are not ashamed to contract matrimony.... *Sixthly*, that they wander outside the precincts without licence from their abbots.... *Seventhly*, that they would fain be **idle**.... *Eighthly*, that they will eat flesh, though there be no need.... *Eleventhly*, that they have private property.... *Twelfthly*, because they envy each other, and are thus spiritual homicides, backbiting each other."

With the Dominican Suso we may compare the Franciscan Alvarus Pelagius (Alvarez Pelayo) whose *De Planctu Ecclesiae* was begun in 1335 and finished in 1340. It was written at the pope's command, and is one of the most valuable surviving documents for the history of papal claims, which Alvarus unhesitatingly and warmly defends. At the same time, he speaks freely as to the harm often done to the Church by popes themselves, and is unsparing in his criticism of Church conditions in general. As papal penitentiary and, later, bishop of Silves, he knew ecclesiastical society inside and out; he was "the classical champion of certain desires and demands for reform" (Haller, p. 86; a detailed and well-balanced estimate). In the first words of the second book, Alvarus comes to the subject of contemporary Church life:

"The holy estate of the Church is changed; the excellent colour of virtues is turned to vice. The stones of the sanctuary are poured out [Lam. iv, 1]; to wit, clergy and Religious, who are the foundations of the Church (81 a).... For nowadays the clergy and many Religious are to the laity **the chief examples of relaxation of all living; for they follow a laxer life.**" The clergy "have embraced the dung of fornication and filthiness" (81 b). Therefore they are blind leaders of blind laity (82 b). Sodomy is frequent: "Alas, alas! within Holy Church many clergy and Religious [practise this] in their hiding-places and conventicles, and now the laity in many—*plerisque*—towns, especially in Italy, set up publicly a sort of unspeakable school and training-ground wherein they exercise themselves in this vice... Would that it were punished, as the law biddeth, with the avenging sword!" (83 b)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Canon law forbade monks to stand as godfathers. In canon law, to stand as godparents to a child constituted not only a social but a spiritual relationship between the parties.

<sup>2</sup> St Bernardino recurs frequently to this subject, and with even greater vehemence and detail. Alvarus thrice repeats this same accusation against friars in art. 73, ff. 242 d, 243 a, 244 b: "many crimes and many scandals have followed."

**Monasteries swallow up parishes** without making proper provision for a perpetual vicar to serve them (129 d). Abbots commonly permit private property, contrary to the Rule (130 a). "Having dealt with the abbots, let us now consider the monks of our own time. And, although **their faults and those of other Religious are very many—quam plurima**—yet these [forty-two] are the most detestable and utterly to be condemned. (1) That they conspire against the abbot who would correct them.... (2) They conspire **not only to depose but to slay him**.... (3) They are incautiously familiar with women, whom they make their gossips.... (4) They have incautious converse with nuns.... (5) Some of them do not blush to contract matrimony.... (6) They wander outside their monasteries without leave of their abbots. (7) They are idle.... (8) They eat flesh continually, without [the excuse of] sickness or infirmity or dispensation from their abbot.... (9) They boast of their nobility and the power of their friends.... (10) They will have cells separate from the dormitory.... (11) They have private property.... (12) They envy each other, and murmur all day one against the other.... (13) They practice as advocates.... (14) They study physics and law.... (15) They rarely show pure obedience, but live after their own will.... (16) They cast off their habit rashly and without necessity, or wear it hidden, for which cause they are now excommunicate.... (17) They linger daily among secular folk and in cities and with their kinsfolk, extorting leave from their prelates, or with no leave at all.... (18) They procure university studies and the doctorate in order that they may sit in the first seats and lord it over others, although a monk's duty is not to teach but to mourn.... (19) Many serfs become monks, without the will of their lords.... (20) They retain what they have earned by their work, or other things, without the abbot's licence and contrary to the Rule.... (21) They commonly take the vows in the hope of becoming abbots or priors or other officers.... (22) They remain in the monastery, unprofessed, beyond the time when they ought to take the vows.... (23) They frequently make wills, which they cannot do [at law].... (24) They take the vows without leave from their abbot.... (25) They frequently pass over to a stricter Order without leave, which is illegal, and still more [when they pass] to an equal or a laxer Order.... (26) They busy themselves with secular business, and are stewards in lords' houses.... (27) Their talk is frequently of money, which they covet, and so they are rather traders than monks.... (28) They have women's veils—*horaria*—and costly girdles.... (29) They bind and loose, and confer sacraments when they are priests, without the bishop's licence.... (30) They accept bishoprics without their abbot's licence.... (31) When they are bishops, they take for their own all that they get personally, and give it to their kinsfolk and to others, as though they were secular clerics.... (32) Many who have vowed themselves to monasticism or other Religions stay in the world and break their vows.... (33) They commonly wear linen shirts.... (34) They keep their offices for life.... (35) They bear witness in cases wherein their

monastery is unconcerned....(36) Many are received on simoniacal terms....(37) Many have places in different monasteries....(38) They have revenues and incomes and usufructs separate from the rest....(39) They keep not the fasts of the Rule....(40) They say not their monastic offices [in choir]....(41) They keep not silence in choir or cloister or dormitory or refectory....(42) They sleep not with their clothes on.... These then are their special sins, apart from others which many of them have in common with other sinners: to wit, **lechery and pride and covetousness and gluttony and other mortal sins**.... Therefore, although monks keep the figure of the apostles, yet nowadays they are far from their lives.... They live to the world and are dead unto God, for they live in delights"<sup>1</sup>. But the most plain-spoken chapter is art. 73 (fol. 240 c; I omit the crudest passage on fol. 244 b). In this chapter Alvarus discourses "First, of the causes of unchastity, especially among Religious. Now, one cause in them, and in every unchaste person<sup>2</sup>, is gluttony; for **the Religious of our day are commonly belly-gods**, that is, gluttonous." He quotes from Climacus: "Broad and easy is the way of the belly, which leadeth to unchastity and perdition, and many are they which go thereby; for **strait and narrow is the way of fasting and abstinence, that leadeth to the life of chastity, and few there be that enter therein**...." The second cause and matter of unchastity to Religious and other folk is **conversation with women and youths** (fol. 240 d; cf. fols. 242 c, 243 a): "Another cause is idleness and negligence, to which many are given. Many of them count it as nothing to waste their time in vain talk and wanderings and excessive sleep; wherefore they fall into that sin (Ezekiel xvi, 49): 'Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her' (fol. 243 a). Another cause of lechery, especially in Religious, is arrogance and elation and pride; for in truth those of our day are commonly incomparably more arrogant than secular folk" (*ibid.*). "Another cause is that they receive youths and boys and children into Religion and permit them to associate indiscriminately with each other and with the rest of the brethren; from which familiarity and reception have followed many iniquities in the Orders, and many scandals have arisen, and much ill-report hath been begotten even among secular folk, and **much apostasy cometh therefrom**; for few, after they have been imprisoned for this vice, remain in the Order, by reason of their shame and confusion" (*ibid.*). "Many Religious, old and young, eat more flesh in Religion than they would have eaten in the world, and drink more wine than they would have drunk as worldlings; wherefore they are commonly carnal; for that which is born (and, we may add, nourished) of the flesh is flesh" (*ibid.*). "Another cause is **conversation with nuns**. For in the convents they have their lady-devotees—*devotas suas*, with whom they too often

<sup>1</sup> Lib. II, art. xxiv, fol. 130.

<sup>2</sup> The text seems ungrammatical, "in quocunque immunditie," but the general sense is plain.

talk too long without witnesses, extorting rather than obtaining leave from the superiors. There are undisciplined laughter and ogling glances exchanged; there are words of levity and vanity and carnality, and amorous touches; there are hearts aflame with fire, and every window open to the deadly things around (Jerem. ix, 21). The rest is indecent [for me] to write; but it is most wicked [for them] to do; on this account many have been imprisoned, and many have apostatized. They are sent thither [to the convents] by their superiors to preach; but **men of this sort go rather to fornicate in this way.** They preach there in public; but privately with their private mate they abuse themselves and their Order. Whatsoever such a preacher edifieth in public, he destroyeth in secret. They exchange gifts, and kindle the flame. Whatsoever such a wretched shameless nun hath gained by her daily and nightly labours, she hath given now to her seducer. Such an one saith that she hath bestowed alms upon her brother; I will say that she hath given food for uncleanness. Scarce any nun is without her carnal devotee, whereby she annulleth her first promise to Christ (Gratian, *Decret.* pars II, c. xxvii, q. 1, c. 9). Such devotion I call corruption; against such have I frequently preached in convents, thus earning these brethren's and sisters' hate. **The abbesses and their superiors know these things, and murmur; but they correct them not, for they fear both the men's and the women's wrath.** Nay, what is more abominable, they get special licence from some of their superiors, who are truly their pandars, for devotions of this kind; and some of them have no shame among their sisters; and **the nun who has no such devotee—nay, seducer—holdeth herself as one deserted.** Secular folk know this; their kinsfolk know it and murmur and are scandalized and complain to the prelates, and profit little; for here is kindled that 'fire that consumeth to destruction' (Job xxxi, 12), nor can it be quenched until that fire shall come which devoureth such as burn with this abominable flame, as the Psalmist saith: 'Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven' (xxi, 9). For in the Orders, and especially of the mendicants, many superiors who ought to correct the rest are an occasion and example of death to others with their devotions<sup>1</sup>. . . . Another occasion of unchastity to Religious and others is talk with women; for women's words are a net. . . . It is unsafe, especially for young Religious, to give their hands

<sup>1</sup> Alvarus recurs to this subject on fol. 265 a (art. 84). "But it is evident how the virgin state, the purest in Holy Church, hath in a sense—*quodammodo*—fallen from its purity; for consecrated virgins in monasteries have fallen either bodily, through wicked and carnal familiarities with secular clergy, and especially through the devotions of some Religious, or spiritually through corruption of the senses and a lascivious mind." Here, again, he becomes too plain-spoken for translation; he goes on to a pessimistic judgement upon maidenhood in general, outside the convent, and concludes: "Nowadays the maid hath 'forgotten her ornaments' (Jerem. ii, 32), to wit, her modesty; many maidens of our days are daughters of Babylon. . . . Such are evil virgins, in body and not in spirit, foolish virgins who have no oil, and shall be shut out by the bridegroom."

for women to kiss, especially to young women or youths, or to hold hand clasped in hand; for their whole body is as a fire, and a wise man, even the most chaste, should say: 'Touch me not.'"

In other passages Alvarus criticizes the Religious at some length, and almost equally severely; their hypocrisy (art. 78), their disobedience (art. 70), their violation of the rules against private property (artt. 54, 64). This last he finds especially shocking in his fellow-Franciscans (art. 66, fols. 215, 216).

"For some (and indeed almost all, especially on this side of the Alps) receive money and coin, directly and indirectly, both in theory and in practice, even collecting deposits without real pressure or imminence of necessity, and spending them at will even in prohibited cases, as I have set forth in many details above... Some, even Friars Minor, say, 'I am a poor man; I have but twenty shillings, or ten, or five, or one.' Such are indeed poor in spirit... they are in mortal sin... Sometimes a Friar Minor will go to law against another, before his superior, for money... Moreover, some Friars Minor have [private] revenues in money for a year or two or even more, left to them as a legacy by their kinsfolk; or again they obtain yearly revenues from lords, like secular stipendiary priests... Moreover some friars, for whose necessities money hath been deposited, make pittances [of extra food] all day long for the benefit of the brethren or the superiors or their other special friends, whether friars or seculars."

The whole article should be read: "this transgression," he says, "is almost universal"—*quasi generalis*. Finally, the special student of this subject should read art. 54, where the author generalizes at the length of two and a half folio pages:

**"Nowadays many—plerique—Religious are successors to the Pharisees in their vices";** "they have turned to look back and have been changed into a statue of salt; that is, of salt which hath lost its savour, and is good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men." "In these days of ours, many stars (to wit, Religious), who were wont to shine in the firmament (to wit, the Church), and to illuminate the night of this life by their life and doctrine, have fallen from the heaven of purity and from the height of sanctity (Matt. xxiv, 29); **wherefore the Day of Doom is at our very doors.**"

Heinrich Suso (1300-65) was one of the three great Dominican mystics (Eckhart, Tauler). His autobiography has been edited by Dean Inge (Methuen and Co.); his *Book of Eternal Wisdom* has also been translated (Angelus Co.). I have preferred to translate afresh from Diepenbrock's edition of the original (*Leben und Schriften*, 3rd ed. Augsburg, 1854, p. 174), comparing it with the version by the Carthusian Surius (*Susonis Opera*, Cologne, 1588, pp. 39-45). The book, written in 1338, is in the form of a dialogue, God speaks with a disciple. He shows the disciple a vision of a ruinous city, and thus explains it:

"This ruined city betokens Religious life<sup>1</sup>, wherein I was formerly

<sup>1</sup> "Ist eine Gestalt des geistlichen Lebens." There can be no doubt that Surius is right in translating "designat vitam monasticam seu religiosam." The English version obscures this.

so worthily served. And, whereas men lived therein in such holiness and security, now it begins to break into terrible ruin in many places; the ramparts begin to fall to pieces and the walls to crack; this betokens that devout obedience, willing poverty and secluded purity<sup>1</sup> in holy simplicity are beginning to decay. And this is gone so far that **nothing is now to be seen but the bare rafters of outward observance.** But that great multitude [which thou sawest in thy vision], those wild beasts in human form, are worldly hearts under Religious appearance, who drive Me out of their souls by their wanton and restless pursuit of shortlived vanities. But whereas **some, holding out their hands to Me, are plucked back by the rest,** this betokens that certain men of good will and good beginnings are turned aside by the talk and the evil example of the rest. The staff whereon I leaned as I stood is the cross of my bitter pains, wherewith I warn them at every moment, that they may think thereon, and set their heart's love upon Me alone. But that bitter cry that thou heardest in My death, that same beginneth to cry aloud here, and crieth evermore upon those in whom neither mine infinite love nor my bitter death hath power to drive the evil worm from their hearts." Again, p. 177: "As the chill frost in May withers and scatters the flowers, so doth perishable love with godly earnest and Religious discipline. If thou doubttest of this, look round thee then at the fair blooming vineyards that stood of old so joyful in their freshest blossom; see how they are withered and wasted, so that little trace is to be seen of devout earnestness and great piety. Thence cometh the irreparable evil that this, which so secretly blights all Religion, **has become a settled custom** and counts as Religious decorum. This is the more harmful in proportion as it seems more harmless. How many a noble garden of spices, which was decked with delightful gifts, and was a heavenly paradise wherein God loved to dwell, is now turned by the love of perishable things into a wilderness of weeds; so that, where roses and lilies grew of old, all is full now of thorns and nettles and thistles, and **swine now wallow where holy angels were wont to dwell.**" Compare also Suso's Letters, no. 1 (Diepenbrock, p. 187; Surius, p. 220) and the 43rd chapter of his autobiography (Diepenbrock, p. 108; Surius, p. 596).

Johann Tauler, one of the greatest of medieval mystics, was born about 1294, entered the Dominican Order, and died in 1361. The special interest of his *Prophecy* is that it was written in 1348, and therefore a few months or weeks before the Black Death burst upon the world in which he lived. In this brief treatise Tauler predicts (as others had predicted before him) some great catastrophe in vengeance for men's sins; and, for the present purpose, the words are no less significant if we suspect the so-called prophecy to have been written under the impression of the actual events. The world, writes Tauler, has been ripening in evil for the last 400 years; the Sacraments have been treated with general and fatal irreverence; we must deal tenderly with our Mother Church, now growing old and almost decrepit—*senescenti et propemodum effoetae*—since the imminent days of anguish are almost beyond

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* the triple monastic vow of obedience, poverty and chastity.

imagination. Again, in the first of his letters, probably earlier in date, he writes:

"[Religious] fall not infrequently into many grievous and gross sins," whereof they never truly repent; therefore "they are doomed to the most grievous torments, and it would be better for them never to have taken the name and habit of Religion" (*Opp.* Cologne, 1615, pp. 816, 786).

## 35

(Chapter xxvi, p. 394)

## THE BLACK DEATH

The first and last of the three quotations in my text are from pp. 457 and 464 of *The Nineteenth Century and After* for March 1925: *A Note on the Black Death*, by Mr A. L. Maycock. My second is from Cardinal Gasquet's *Great Pestilence*, 1893, pp. 216, 218 (ed. 1908, pp. 250, 253). The distortions of facts in this book are too remarkable to be wholly involuntary. The writer, who is concerned to show that the clergy did their duty, suppresses about 75 per cent. of the unfavourable witnesses. I here give references only to the 1893 edition, but I believe all these cases will be found unaltered in that of 1908. At Florence, the priests avoided the sick (pp. 16, 29); so also at Padua (p. 26); at Siena both priests and Religious (*ibid.*). At Rimini the priests fled (p. 27); at Parma, priests and Religious (p. 28). At Paris, while the priests left their posts, their defection was to some extent supplied by "some" or "a few" Religious—*Religiosis aliquibus*, and by the faithful constancy of the Sisters of the Hôtel-Dieu; the Cardinal here suppresses the all-important qualification of *aliquibus* (p. 47; cf. p. 37, where his reference to Martin leaves even less excuse for this omission; Martin translates quite correctly "*à quelques Religieux*"). In all these cases the Cardinal, while quoting what suits him from the chronicler, takes the liberty of ignoring this contrary evidence, though it is mentioned in the same breath. Again, he assures us that "the Bishops were strangely spared, although it is certain that they did not shrink from their duty, but according to positive evidence remained at their posts." The positive evidence, if only he had ventured to quote it, goes clearly the other way. "The pope, shutting himself up in his chamber, which was continually furnished with great fires, gave access to no man." So writes Matthaëus Nuwenburgensis (Böhmer, *Fontes*, vol. iv, p. 261), from whom the Cardinal quotes on p. 34, but with the omission of this crucial passage. Islip, who came to the see of Canterbury, in the last months or weeks of the plague, is reported by Birchington to have visited his own province; "then, visiting perfunctorily the dioceses of Rochester and Chichester, he afterwards remained in his manors" (Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, vol. i, p. 43). The bishop of Bath and Wells

spent the terrible days neither at Bath nor at Wells, but in his remote village palace of Wiveliscombe; the Cardinal himself is aware that he remained there "till the worst was past in May of 1349"; moreover, he was back there again, apparently continuously, from December 5 to April 29, 1350 (Somerset Rec. Soc. vol. ix, pp. xxxv, lviii). The bishop of Rochester "old and decrepit, stayed all that [plague] year [of 1349] at [his manor of] Trottsclive" (Wharton, *l.c.* p. 376). The bishop of Norwich, in spite of Dr Jessopp's contrary implication, spent a great part of the perilous time far away from his episcopal city; some of it in his retired country palace at Hoxne.

As to the Religious, the one really favourable testimony comes from Sicily, where the chronicler was himself a Franciscan, and wrote about ten years after the first visitation (Michael Platiensis, in R. Gregorio, *Bib. Scriptorum*, &c. vol. i, pp. 562 ff.). He writes that, in Sicily, "even the priests [refused to come] to hear their [the sick folks'] confessions. The care of those stricken fell to the Friars Minor, the Dominicans and members of other Orders, whose convents were in consequence soon emptied of their inhabitants." We may gauge the literal accuracy of this description by the last sentence; no valid evidence has yet been adduced to prove that Religious, in general, died in greater proportions than the rest of mankind. As to the clergy in general, Abbot Gilles li Muisis is sometimes quoted as asserting this; but all he says is "*very many—quamplurimi*—of the priests who visited the sick died"; also, in another place, that few or none, in his own city of Tournai, died without their sacraments. Again, many good ecclesiastics frequented the sick, and these commonly died (*Chron.* ed. de Smet, pp. 366, 374). This evidence goes some real way to qualify the strong condemnatory words of the majority of contemporaries, but it is far from justifying these modern contentions. For in medieval cities there was commonly a priest to about every hundred adults; none of Gilles's statements, therefore, in default of more definite evidence, can be pressed into proof of any special Christian devotion. True, "very many" priests died; but so did "very many" people. If all priests did their duty, each would have to shrive and anoint, on an average, only fifty folk in about six months. As to the burials, li Muisis tells us explicitly that the priests murmured at the sanitary precautions which led the civil authorities to simplify the whole proceedings for the sake of sanitation, because this curtailed their fees (*ibid.* p. 373, a passage not reproduced by modern writers).

Yet it is on the strength of this kind of garbled evidence that the Black Death is said to have brought out the special devotion of the medieval clergy, and of the Religious in particular. Even Dr H. C. Lea, usually so careful, writes incidentally of "the devotion shown by the Mendicants during the Black Death, . . . when the priests abandoned their posts, and the friars alone were found to tend the sick and console the dying" (*Inquisition in M.A.* vol. i, p. 290). But here, contrary to his wont, he gives no reference; and he was probably either under a confused recollection of the continuator of Guillaume de Nangis, or



taking Jessopp's word without verification. The fruit of such misrepresentations may be clearly seen, for instance, in Mr Maycock's article. The author there says (p. 461): "In this terrible environment the steadfast devotion and utterly selfless bravery of the Mendicant Orders shines with a splendid and sustained brilliance.... In the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris, ... the sisters of Charity carried on their noble work of tending the sick without the smallest regard for their own safety<sup>1</sup>.... The Franciscan and Dominican friars laboured no less splendidly; and the enormous number of those who succumbed during the plague tells only too clearly how widespread had been their activities, and how steadfastly they had remained in the most grievously afflicted areas, inspiring by their example and their fortitude, and consoling by their boundless charity. Their memory has been preserved with due admiration and respect by many historians." Yet for this he gives in print no reference beyond Lea's brief *obiter dictum*; and later, while courteously meeting my request for farther evidence, he confessed himself unable to specify more than "Hecker, Jessopp, Gasquet and a writer in the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* (vol. x, p. 128)." Hecker was a German doctor who wrote a useful monograph on the subject 80 years ago, mainly from the medical point of view; and, so far as I can find, he rather contradicts than supports this assertion (tr. Babington, 3rd ed. 1859, pp. 23, 46). He emphasizes the heroism of the Parisian sisters of mercy, but, following the same original authority from which we learn this, points out that there were "few" folk courageous enough to undertake those ecclesiastical offices, from which the priests fled almost everywhere in France. The *Catholic Encyclopaedia* is a work of extraordinary inequality; some of its articles are excellent, but many are inaccurate to the last degree; and no real scholar would quote it as a scientific authority. On this present subject it only says: "Great self-sacrifice was shown by the clergy, especially by the Franciscans, who are said to have lost 100,000 (?) members through the epidemic" (vol. x, p. 129 b). For this no reference whatever is given; and we have seen that the first part flatly contradicts the contemporary chroniclers, of whom one only, I believe, mentions the services of the clergy in general except to condemn them strongly; while that one exception, li Muisis, when carefully studied, gives an ambiguous report. The whole story of exceptional clerical devotion during this plague rests, at its present stage at least, on the same sort of historical foundation as the Protestant legends of the Walled-up Nun and the Secret Instructions to the Jesuits.

And yet it is perfectly natural that such legends should grow up, so long as the appointed guardians of history take no trouble to verify references and supply the necessary corrections. Here, again, is a typical example. Mr Maycock published, also in *The Nineteenth Century*, two articles on *The Inquisition* (Aug.-Sept. 1925). I wrote

<sup>1</sup> This is doubtless true; the continuator of Guillaume de Nangis gives them a perfect testimonial, in the same breath in which he praises those "some" Religious and condemns the priests.

to the editor, pointing out that they were seriously misleading, and he offered me 2000 words for reply. Those 2000 words were altogether taken up with exposing a few of the writer's more serious inaccuracies, and with showing how he had apparently read no original sources, but relied mainly upon such modern and untrustworthy apologists as we have just been dealing with. The editor declined to print this reply, on the plea that it was not "constructive" (a condition which his first letter had been far from suggesting), and that a "destructive" article would not interest his public. The effect of this editorial attitude is, in plain words, that, the more inaccurate an article may be, the more certainly it will be shielded from criticism. If it takes four or five pages merely to expose a writer's mistaken or misleading statements, then the very need for correction makes it impossible for an editor to allow correction, and it is far better that the public should be left in the quiet belief that they have sucked in accurate information. Thus, again, from this successful venture in journalism other journalists and encyclopaedia-contributors will gather their own ideas; other editors, in turn, will protect them; and so the vicious circle goes round and round. If a first-rate study of the Black Death, based on full documentary evidence (like Hoeniger's brief study for Germany) were published tomorrow, the truth would still take many years to reach those readers who are compelled, as most of us are, to gather our general ideas on some of the most important questions from the better-class periodical literature.

## 36

(Chapter xxvii, p. 397)

## CONTEMPORARY GENERALIZATIONS (2)

This Appendix, again, needs a preface. If the evidence collected here and in Appendix 34 seems startling and almost incredible, is not this due to the partiality of one class of historians, and the negligence of others, in this particular field? Why should not the public have been told of this evidence long ago, since we do not need to dig very far into contemporary sources before we begin to realize that the witnesses are mostly of this complexion? The causes, I think, are threefold. (1) Even professional historians are often far more dependent upon editors' prefaces and summaries, and less upon the original texts, than is usually realized. And the editors, with a few recent and honourable exceptions, have generally been hitherto (2) amateurs, or (3) strongly prejudged to one foregone conclusion. The amateur is generally an ecclesiastic to whom, on the whole, we owe much gratitude for his labours, but who knows very little outside the particular text he is editing, and who, if he finds it unflattering to his brethren of the past, charitably hopes that this is more or less exceptional. Thus,

many of the most significant facts in ecclesiastical or social history pass without emphasis or even unnoticed. But, beyond this, there are editors who, pledged to a view of history which renders it almost impossible to admit that the Church has ever seriously erred in morals, are tempted to put the skeletons deliberately into the cupboard. If other historians of today had been compelled, by the scope of their work, to check this kind of suppression as often as I have, it is probable that I should no longer enjoy a certain bad pre-eminence in destructive criticism. Let me here instance the case of St Catharine's *Dialogue*, to which we come a few pages later in this present Appendix. The ecclesiastically-authorized translation of this book, published in 1906 by Mr Algar Thorold with official Roman Catholic *imprimatur* from the archbishop's house at Westminster, is one of those pieces of literary dishonesty which go far to justify Newman's and Lord Acton's warnings that we can hardly expect historical truth from a believer in Papal Infallibility, on questions where the Church's honour is thought to be at stake<sup>1</sup>. The whole of chapters 121-130, 133, and 162-164—that is, nearly 36 close-printed quarto pages—are silently suppressed; and not only silently, but with deliberate disguise, for in this edition the numeration of the chapters is omitted, so that even a reader familiar with the original may waste a good deal of time before he discovers the fraud, while the ordinary reader can have no suspicion of it. The preface contains no hint; on the contrary, Mr Thorold assures us that “with facts, as such, there can indeed be no tampering”; “my aim has been to translate as literally as possible”; “I have almost always followed the text of Gigli, a learned Siennese ecclesiastic” and so on (pp. 2, 24). The title-page, indeed, does bear, among other announcements, “a new and abridged edition”; but even careful readers do not always study title-pages; and, as a matter of fact, this word “abridged” not only escaped my notice until I had wasted a great deal of time over the book, but it also passed unnoticed even by the cataloguers at the Cambridge University Library. It is in an author's preface that we have a right to expect some confession, and some reasons given, for garbling a classical book.

On comparing this cheap edition with its expensive predecessor (1896) and successor (1925), we see that these others bear no official *imprimatur*, that St Catharine's judgements on the clergy are not suppressed, and that the translator can therefore afford to number his chapters as they are numbered in the original Italian, except that he omits the *Treatise of Providence*, presumably as being too dull. The saint's *Dialogue*, therefore, may be had either in an expensive and historically correct edition, or (as recommended by the hierarchy) in a cheap edition which, from the historical point of view, is quite shameless in its suppression of truth and suggestion of falsehood. For anyone who, for historical purposes, reads this cheap edition, this edition

<sup>1</sup> For full quotations see my *Roman Catholic History* (Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 6d., reprinted from *The Modern Churchman*).

which the official Church commends to the faithful, will find himself as cruelly deceived as an African savage might be deceived by a trader who quoted the Ten Commandments as the watchword of European civilization and took the liberty of omitting one single word in each case. In this volume, Mr Thorold and his archiepiscopal patrons lead us carefully through St Catharine's description of the model priest, and then quietly suppress the only chapters of real significance for actual history, in which the saint stigmatizes the average priest or Religious of 1380 as contradicting, in almost every respect, what a priest or Religious ought to be. Here and there a sentence of frank criticism is allowed to stand in the other chapters; but, at a moderate computation, at least nine-tenths have been burked. Nor does it mend matters for the general public when we remind ourselves that there are many truthful Roman Catholics, layfolk and priests, who are as much distressed by these historical distortions as non-Romanists are provoked. Those better men are silent and powerless; it is of the essence of their Church that they should be powerless and silent in such cases as this; and it is behind these respectable and respected figures that the falsifier takes shelter. It is highly probable that Mr Thorold himself did not cut those chapters out, nor deliberately cover his tracks by omitting chapter-numbers and retaining a misleading preface; very likely these things were done for him "*Westmonasterii*," as the *imprimatur*-page has it,—i.e. in the archbishop's office. Let us not forget, again, that there are a certain number of English folk who may still read the real truth about the clergy and Religious of 1380, if they can afford to buy the expensive and ecclesiastically-unauthorized editions. But this, again, is only part of the same policy which teaches one sort of doctrine to the Italian peasant, and another sort to cultivated Germans or English-speaking people. It adds to the general confusion. If religious propaganda were always consistently obscurantist, and as easy to be exposed as in this present case, then the average puzzled reader would know better where he stood. At present, when he is shocked by the discovery of some startling falsehood, it is pleaded in excuse that some of these advocates, at some times, do really tell the naked truth. Meanwhile we can only look forward to some more scrupulous generation, in which the man who would not dream of falsifying a cheque will as little condescend to falsify history.

Gilles li Muisis was born in 1272, and took the vows in 1289 at the great abbey of St-Martin-de-Tournai, which was already going fast downhill, and went from worse to worse for half a century<sup>1</sup>. In 1327 he was elected prior, and in 1331 he became abbot, after great difficulties raised first at the papal court and then by his diocesan bishop. He set himself at once to reform the monastery, and by 1347 he had succeeded in paying off the great load of debt. He then began dictating (for he was nearly blind) different chronicles

<sup>1</sup> See his autobiography in de Smet, vol. II, pp. 115 ff.: "So many disorders began, that it would be long to tell all; and it is better to be silent than to reveal, for it is sometimes harmful to tell the truth."

and memorials, and moral reflections on the age. In 1350 a skilful physician "opened his eyes with a silver instrument after the fashion of a needle, without peeling them and with little pain...and he saw sufficiently for his age." He died in October 1353.

Gilles notes that, in earlier times, his own abbey and that of Afflighem had been so strict that "they were reputed as prisons among other monasteries"; but now he fills more than 140 pages with predominantly unflattering comments on monks, nuns and friars in his own day (vol. 1, pp. 142-283).

"Religion brings wealth, and poverty Religion; **riches come, and Religion flees**. . . consciences are bare of Religion, the ancient customs will be no longer kept. . . Men of this sort, [poor and devout,] made monasteries; princes, merchants and burgesses gladly helped them; they kept great hospitality for all men, and fed the poor from that which remained over. When they did thus, the matter went well. . . Now they are enriched, and all is troubled; the good that they were wont to do is almost all gone; the world is [the monk's] comrade, and has swallowed all; thus are the monasteries of today everywhere trodden under foot (p. 145). The [monk's] body is in the minster, but his heart is in the marketplace." The cloister is irksome: "We need air forsooth! we need to visit our kinsfolk; we wish to take our pleasure together with them. Alas! thou hast promised to despise the world; thou art bound in duty to restrain thy goings and thy comings: monk out of cloister is fish out of water" (p. 147). At the services "they would fain always sleep, and desert the congregation" (p. 150). "Ha! lord saint Benedict, visit your convents! In body, [the monks] leave the world, which is truly naught but empty wind; in heart, I know not whether they keep their congregation, but certainly thou wilt everywhere find comely young fellows—*des bians jeunes*. If they kept your Rule well, I should be well pleased, but they are so unstable, that it is which grieveth me. In bearing, in vesture, all is in disarray; **this is no way to Paradise**. . . Of old, they kept the cloister and stability, this was great delight to the ancients; now the monasteries are so rich and affluent that monks go far and near to visit other folk" (p. 152). Gilles passes on to that description of the abbots' luxury which I have given in Appendix 4; and he interrupts himself in the middle (p. 154): "According to God, sheep without shepherd go to perdition; **nowadays many are lost in Religion**; of old, men came to the cloister for their salvation; in these days **we see scant devotion everywhere**. . . Look at your monks' garments nowadays, how the greater part set their heart on these quaint fashions; at home, many grievous adventures come from this; secular folk say very hard things on this score" (p. 157). Modern monks, again, constantly quarrel over elections of superiors; the appeal is taken to the archbishop or to Rome, to the great waste of their revenues. Formerly, "licences to go forth [from the precincts] were strictly limited; [nowadays], they go forth without leave, which indeed is great pity" (p. 161). They keep private property, under colourable excuses, in spite of the Rule and of Benedict XII's recent decrees (p. 170). They contrast strongly

with their predecessors, who "had no service, whether of menservants or maidservants, but chastised their own bodies" (p. 176). They shirk their Church services nowadays; each side of the choir is in such haste to get to the end that it interrupts the other in the middle, "as though they were quarrelling together" (p. 186). **The older Orders neglect learning**, they should take example from the friars (p. 190). They bury rich folk, and get pittances for themselves (p. 191). "I see good turning daily to evil" (p. 196). "Our days are evil now, God shall turn them to good, and St Benedict also, in the right time and place. . . . We see **in every country** how men deport themselves, and what examples they give of **unruly bearing**—*maintiens dissolus*; I can find very little excuse for white monk or grey or black, or for persons generally in all the Orders" (p. 200; again, p. 206 in other words). "God, all this while, is silent and self-restrained, and maketh as though He were afeared to punish misdeeds, while He delayeth His doom" (p. 207).

We pass now to the nuns. Gilles begins with a long and fervent invocation to their Mistress, the Blessed Virgin (pp. 209-13). "Three things are natural to women: weeping, talking and spinning"; let them turn these natural inclinations to God's service<sup>1</sup>. But here it is the same story: "anciently," they were all that they should be, and now they are changed (p. 214). "Now, would to sweet Jesus that nuns did thus! that they busied themselves with prayer by night and day, and kept well all the stability they have promised, and always observed also their other vows! Nowadays it is quite otherwise; I cannot keep silence here. . . . Some folk are welcomed into nunneries, and no order is kept in giving folk good cheer; they go thither gladly and often and at many times; but the young are better welcomed there than the bald-headed" (p. 215). **This leads inevitably to love-affairs**: "Ought they to leave God's love for a man? . . . Such lovers make as though they kept their vow, but they send messengers many times and oft; nuns rise up early, if they are in the convent, for their hearts spin like weathercocks in the wind. From these messengers they take letters or tablets, wherein are written words of worldly love. Ah, most sweet nuns! all ye who do thus, beware lest you lose the flower of your honour. The frequentation of these foolish amours bereaves you oftentimes of your devotions, and makes you hate your convents and your ordinances; thereon are all your thoughts fixed, and all your intentions. Thus ye take frequent leave [of your cloister], and without reason, but it is love which preacheth to you, which holdeth it ever seasonable that ye should have often occasion to flit abroad, and this it is which maketh you leave your house at the time. Nowadays, these nuns desire to be quaint indeed; all are like sleuth-hounds; they pursue after many acquaintances; they make many ordinances of love; alas! **of old there were many saints among nuns. . . . Now hath**

<sup>1</sup> His text is here taken from a Latin proverb—"Flere, loqui, nere, statuit Deus in muliere."

**the world entangled them all, as men may see, in her snares**" (p. 216). "Ladies Religious, white and black and all, ye give occasion of talk and of doubt among these folk; for, when they see your goings forth from your convents, fools say forthwith, 'See now these wantons!' . . . The pope would do well if he enclosed them at once; he would do so without delay, if he heard us" (p. 218; cf. pp. 219, 220, 226-7). Gilles turns to plead with the nuns themselves: "Ye are not the only folk who are disparaged; all have their share in all lands; folk of Holy Church are little esteemed; men complain that they have so much and are so well endowed. No man knoweth the cause but God alone; but I dare assert for certain truth that, if they did now as they did of old, things would go otherwise everywhere" (p. 223). And the only hope is in God: "Now, we might preach daily to these nuns, and wear out a tongue of steel, before we could detach some of their hearts from the world; thither they go and entangle themselves when they can. Some day shall come, which God the Holy Ghost shall reveal, and enquire into thoughts and words and deeds; then shall He reveal all that is hidden, and God the Son shall require vengeance from His Father." But, for the present **"God sleepeth, so say some folk"** (p. 231). The nuns have forgotten God's lesson through the Great Plague, only a few months since (p. 234). And he ends this section with the assurance that **"what I have said, comprehends all Orders"**; he had meant to deal with each separately, but this may suffice (p. 235).

He then speaks of the Béguines. We need not follow him here in detail; he has rather less fault to find with them than with the nuns; but everywhere he finds something of the same painful contrast between "les anciennes" and the more pleasure-loving, less disciplined sisters of his own day. "We do indeed still find good ladies, wise Religious sitting in their chambers; but we find also very many foolish women who have no care to sit in their chairs and spin; whereas the ancients speak to them of the good old times and good schools [of virtue], these hold all that for a trifle, and let the ancients go as chatters" (p. 242).

He is more lenient to the Mendicants, but still seriously critical of their pride and luxury in comparison with their predecessors: "men gave to them in times past; now is time to take back" (p. 249). Even their learning and teaching declines nowadays (p. 263): "The Holy Ghost suffereth that day after day should grow worse" (p. 266). **"With all this, secular folk grow colder and colder" towards the friars** (p. 272; cf. pp. 279, 281); "every [religious] habit nowadays tendeth altogether to lechery"—*luxure* (p. 275). **Reform must come some day**: "The Court of Rome will work its will; when it is Jesus Christ's will, He will mend all, and will turn the current of fortune altogether backwards, and take vengeance on those who abuse themselves" (p. 278).

Yet, all this time, Gilles has tried to keep his blame within moderate bounds. "Comparisons are odious," he has no wish to quarrel (p. 192).

If he told everything as it is, he would provoke wrath (p. 197). **There is much good among the Benedictines; but of old there was still more:** "I might say much of days past, but, I know well, if I told all the truth I should incur great indignation from many folk" (p. 198). Among the nuns, again, **"there are many convents where the Order is well kept"** (p. 228), especially the royal convent of Fontenelles (p. 232). He takes pains to say all the good he can of the Béguines (pp. 239, 241, especially the older sort), and of the friars (pp. 242, 267-8, 273, 280, 281). But there is nothing which in any way contradicts his general criticisms; he leaves no doubt of his conviction that monasticism is very deeply decayed.

Pierre Berchoire was prior of St-Éloi at Paris, and one of the most learned men of his time; he dedicated his main works to the cardinal bishop of Praeneste, about 1360 A.D. I translate from his collected works, Cologne, 1730 (*Moral.* lib. vii, c. 6; *Opp.* vol. i, p. 78):

"Take it for certain, that Christ hath many warriors in the Church today; many Religious and clerics and preachers; yet few are found fit to conquer Midian (that is, the devil), and to fight against him in word and deed... There are indeed some few among them, to wit, three hundred among ten thousand, who touch the water not only with their tongue but also with their hand; that is, who not only preach and talk but even practise what they preach." [Again, *Moral.* lib. xxvii, c. i, p. 177:] "Antiochus [Epiphanes] signifies the devil, who, by reason of the sins of the Christians, hath brought his hosts of vices to Jerusalem, that is, into the Christian faith, and hath entered proudly into the Holy of Holies, that is, Religion, which **he hath utterly despoiled of its spiritual ornaments. For he hath taken thence the altar of devotion**, the candlestick of discretion, the table of compassion, the vials of preaching, the little mortars of the fear of God, **the veil of continence and chaste lustre**, the crowns of eminence and honour, and the ornament of good conversation and spiritual honesty and glory. The Church seemeth to have been despoiled by the devil of all these things, and brought to miserable desolation" (cf. p. 178 a-c). [And again, in his *Dictionarium Morale*, s.v. *Religio*, after speaking of the monk's profession of chastity, he proceeds to complain that] "many" break this rule: "indeed **there are many who give way in excess to lechery and uncleanness**, not only in the days of their youth but also of their old age, as we see plainly at present in the case of **innumerable—infinite—Religious**, who nowadays spend their days rather in pleasure than in chastity, rather in lechery than in continence or Religious observance; and this is because Lechery, the mistress of the world, is so shameless as to thrust herself everywhere. She unlocks the palaces of princes, she penetrates the chambers of prelates, she possesses the halls of the clergy, she overturns the chariots of contemplative men, and breaks open the cells of the Religious; for among the old she smokes [to heaven], among the young she fights, among women she commands. In brief, this Lady Lechery defileth all, infecteth all, consumeth all with the waters of



her deluge." [Berchoire goes on to complain of the general neglect of the rules of poverty and labour and claustration in Religious houses. Many love not soberness but drunkenness; the old strict life is gone]; "there are few of that sort in the cloister nowadays...men live a worldly life in Religion" (vol. vi, pp. 23-4).

A clerical poet of the fourteenth century thinks that, on the whole, the world would do better if there were no monks, no nuns, and no Béguines,

"for, **since they grew up**, law and faith have perished, and **the whole world hath changed for the worse**; whether it be by their fault, the Creator of all things knoweth" (Höfler, *Gesch. d. Hus. Bewegung*, vol. II, 1865, p. 54).

For John Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) see C. Ullmann, *Reformers before the Reformation*, 1855, vol. II, p. 32; also the excellent modern monograph of A. Wautier d'Aygalliers, recently translated into English as *R. the Admirable* (1925). He began as priest to Ste-Gudule at Brussels, and retired in his sixtieth year to the monastery of Groenendael. Here he lived nearly thirty years longer, distinguished by his monastic zeal and mystic contemplation, and attracting the attention of Tauler and of Gerard de Groote, the founder of the Brethren of Common Life. He wrote his *Book of the Seven Enclosures* for a Franciscan nun, Marguerite de Meerbeke<sup>1</sup>. He reminds her of the original glory of her Order, and continues:

"They follow his Rule now after their glosses, not after the text, as they did at first. Poverty hath become lordliness, riches and self-indulgence, so far as they can grasp thereat. With their lips they praise poverty, but they follow her not in their works. Penance and labour have become sadly lifeless; for the brethren imagine themselves to be sickly, and seek solace and comfort. Learning is become subtlety, questions and novel inventions, making little or nothing for God's honour or for the salvation of souls. **Correction is sore decayed**; for charity and fear have grown feeble; correction is done more for the sake of men's report than for God's honour or for the health of souls. Thus, alas! holy life is sore dimmed and decayed **in all the Orders**, and in all estates of Religion." Again (chap. 20): "All such evil examples do children find nowadays when they come into convents; **and thus do the Order and holy life decay from day to day, the longer the more.**" Therefore if Margaret would be "a living daughter of God," she must imitate the nuns of the past, and not take the colour of her own time<sup>2</sup>. [Again, in *The Book of the Twelve Béguines*, he devotes a whole chapter (56) to "A comparison between the Church

<sup>1</sup> Wautier, p. 216. I have translated these extracts from the original Flemish, with the help of Surius's Latin version (ed. Cologne, 1692, p. 199). Wautier's book does not sufficiently emphasize Ruysbroeck's criticisms; and English readers must be specially warned against the so-called translation of the *Book of the Twelve Béguines* by Mr John Francis. This professes in its preface to be complete, but it really reproduces only a small fraction of the original.

<sup>2</sup> *Werken*, vol. IV, p. 65; briefly referred to in Wautier, p. 120.

prelates of our time, and those which were in the early Church"<sup>1</sup>. He writes]: "The religion which was founded and established by Christ and His disciples hath now been **overthrown by Satan** and his followers." [Among twelve Apostles there was one Judas; among a hundred prelates and priests of today you will scarce find one follower of Christ. He makes no exception here for Religious, but, on the contrary, comes presently to their failings (ch. 59)]: "You will find many who vow this vow [of poverty], but few who truly live after it." The only habit that Christ prescribed was that of good works; "but those who now, in Religion, wear a spiritual habit and live contrary to these [three] points [of poverty, chastity, and obedience], shall come to confusion and shame, both now and to eternity" (p. 171). Then, in chapter 61, "There are many men in Orders and in Religious estates who have vowed to live after God's counsels, yet who live neither after His counsels nor even His commandments. They have promised poverty and the absence of property, chastity and obedience to God and their superiors even to their death. This was Christ's inward habit... Yet this inward habit is sore despised and cast underfoot; yea, even their outward habit is now made like unto the worldly habit... **The Devil hath conquered the world**: it is subdued unto him. He is armed against the clergy and against all that live upon religious revenues, with their sins. He hath his own household that serveth him, clad in his hellish garments, which are **uncharity, unchastity and disobedience; hereby hath all the estate of Religion been put to flight**." Ruysbroeck contrasts the ancient Religious charity, poverty, and humility with modern niggardliness, luxurious enjoyment of private property, and pride; and then he continues (ch. 62): "Three sins reign in the world, in the clergy, and in all estates of Religion which should live from the goods of Holy Church, from the highest to the lowest, with but few exceptions. These are **sloth, gluttony and unchaste life**; these have cast out true holiness. Sloth<sup>2</sup> is a weariness and loathing of God and His service, and carelessness of His teaching and graces and glories... Gluttony nowadays is unrecognized and little thought of, yet most wonted in all men, and it reigneth over all the world, in cloisters and in cells, in Orders and in all estates of Religion, that is over all who serve the wine-cup and live in disorderly and excessive pleasure in food and drink, and who despise temperance and sobriety, which Christ Himself lived and taught... [Gluttons] have for close followers drunkenness, indiscipline and immodesty, quarrels, cursing, swearing, contests, fightings and unchaste living; these are works of the flesh, which may not inherit the Kingdom of God; and these are found **in all Orders and in Religious persons**, as in the world. We find also in the Orders, and in all estates of Religion where there is a congregation of men, one devilish sin; and that is separation of hearts, of souls, and of earthly

<sup>1</sup> *Werken*, vol. v, p. 151; Surius, p. 360.

<sup>2</sup> This, as Surius rightly translates, is the *acedia* of monastic disciplinarians.

goods. There, from the common revenues, live [some as] rich and [some as] poor, [some as] lords and [some as] servants<sup>1</sup>. [The lords, the prelates, sleep long and keep their comforts; they sit in chambers with their households; they have many dishes and the best wine that can be found. Those who keep the choir-service and go to refectory have pulse and bread and one or two eggs; their lords deem that enough for them. When they murmur at this inequality, the prelates take no heed. Those who own much property, or have much of the common wealth, they can spend or amass much, and gather and hoard. Rich worldlings do indeed help and pity the sick and poor; but rich cloisterers, who have no goods of their own by right, let their sisters or brothers lie sick by their side, or hungry or thirsty and wasted with poverty. Pride, untruth, avarice, disdain, rancour, spite, hate and envy; of these things are the Orders and the cloisters full; and not only those who live from common revenues, but also the Mendicants who live from daily alms.]<sup>2</sup> Christ is now unknown; His life, His teaching, His works are disparaged by all such as serve sin and follow their own will."

Ruysbroeck speaks even more plainly in his *Commentaries on the Tabernacle of the Covenant*, ch. 123 (*Werken*, vol. II, p. 185; Surius, p. 151): "And therefore, if the priesthood had been as unspiritual at the beginning of Holy Church as they are now, the Christian faith would never have spread so far; but now all estates are decayed from their beginning. And that may be seen in all Religious in the world; we still find in the cloisters monks and nuns who are very true to their vocation and devout and pious and well-ordered in every way. **Some of these are of good-will, simple, holy; and these are held of no account**; and some of them are crafty and double-minded, feigning that which they are not; and these are oftentimes made superiors and prelates, and then they confess themselves for what they are. For they exalt themselves above the rest, as though they were in the world, and had possessions, and their parents were dead, and they themselves entered into their goods and possessions. Then they forget their holiness, and administer worldly goods, and bear themselves as earthly lords and hand over the souls and religious discipline to the prior; for they are now so busy with manifold occupations that they can scarce hear Mass." After drawing out this contrast between the unedifying pride of modern abbots and primitive simplicity, he continues: "**Now, things are just the contrary.** For the abbots and monks that now be, these turn their backs to God and their faces to the world, and leave their solitudes, and ride and go outwards to visit kinsfolk and friends, and seek after meat and drink and bodily satis-

<sup>1</sup> The Flemish editor notes that the following detailed description of irregularities is omitted from one important MS.: "and, in fact, there may well be some exaggeration here." The concurrent evidence seems to show, however, that there is no exaggeration beyond what we take for granted from the pen of a fervent ascetic.

<sup>2</sup> Here all the MSS. begin to agree again.

factions; **and hence come at times sin and shame and confusion before the world.** But if they could conceal their wickedness from the people, they would care little for God and for good conscience. You may well see, when a girl vowed to a nunnery goeth forth from her cloister, she doth so adorn herself as though she would sell herself to the Devil and to the world; for she is occasion of many sins which she herself knoweth not, and whereof she shall some day give account at God's doom. Lo! such folk take their cloister for a prison, and the world for a paradise; for of God or of bliss everlasting they take no account. You may note this plainly; for **where there are forty monks in a monastery**, they sing scarcely any Masses beyond those to which they are compelled, the common Masses of the convent. And at night, when the bell is rung for matins, **four or five appear** from among those who should come, and these rather by constraint than of their free will; **all the rest sleep** and keep their rest and their comfort. They hold many chapters, and this is useful and good; yet none the less doth Religion decay from day to day; for, since each judgeth others more than himself, therefore corrections are ungracious, and so there is a lack of concord and unity in brotherly love. For, seeing that each displeaseth not himself, nor accuseth his own faults, when they are rebuked they can ill bear reprehension." They shun the common refectory, and eat flesh under plea of ill-health; the officials make themselves hoards from the revenues that pass through their hands. Now let us come to the Mendicant Orders; they began in holiness. "But nowadays these Orders have spread very far, and begging brothers are many; yet **few are they who keep these Rules.** For all that the early brethren left and despised, the present brethren seek and covet. And that mayest thou mark in many ways; for they gape wondrous sore after earthly goods and worldly honours; and, though some of them spend some pains in virtue, yet **even from these virtues they seek spiritual honours**<sup>1</sup>. They love to eat and drink choicely, and to dress curiously, and nothing can be too costly for them in food or drink or clothing, so far as they can get it. They build lofty churches and great convents; and they draw rich folk rather to themselves than that they lead them to God or to virtue. They would fain be called poor, and ever complain of poverty, yet live in superfluity of all goods... We find among them rich and poor folk, even as in the world; some possess four or five frocks, and others scarce one. **They flatter sinners** who are able to give much, and they oppress the poor who have little, and who would gladly receive. They go begging as limitours through towns and villages; they preach in word, but little in deed, and therefore their words bring little fruit. **They seek the wool rather than the sheep; that is, more their own gain than men's salvation.** They are greedy and vain, and nothing may fill them full, neither corn nor seed nor eggs nor cheese nor money; and

<sup>1</sup> Surius thus expands this brief and obscure sentence of the original, and the Flemish editor accepts it.

all that people have, that they are ready to take; although there be no other convent within seven miles, yet they can well consume all that can be drawn from that district. Even though men give to them rather from shame and from decency than from charity, yet of that they reckon not, so long as they may get the stuff; and thus virtue decayeth among them and among the people. Those who can well beg and collect much, those are welcome among them. They sing many Masses, and chant loud by night and day; for they live among the people and must needs please them somehow; but when they come to the refectory, then it is the prior and custos and guardian and lector, and other rich brethren that have rents or who **have liberal lady-devotees**, these all are in side chambers and enjoy their luxuries, while the poor brethren go to refectory and find pottage, with two herrings and small-beer. The rich think that the poor have enough, and more than they deserve; and the poor, for their part, are jealous that the rich have so much of what, they think, should be common; and thence groweth hate and envy, all through inequality of livelihood. After dinner, then the brethren buzz forth like bees from their hive, each seeking his own again. Is any rich man sick in the town? thither they send two brethren, that he may choose his sepulchre in their cloister. Other brethren walk to take the air, and visit their spiritual daughters, wherefrom cometh little or no profit, and sometimes great confusion. Yet no man may correct them; for they are proud and will not bend. Even if men would punish them for their transgressions, then they call upon great folk from outside who come to their help; or, if they have money, they easily win over their superiors, and hold their ground in despite [of correction]. **If any man among them be simple and God-fearing**, and would fain hold to the old rules, **such an one they oppress and despise**; he shall suffer more than any other.

"Thus thou mayest mark how **all Orders and all Religious** have decayed from their beginnings, and have conformed themselves to the world, **except those folk who are strictly enclosed, such as the Carthusians and all the nuns of enclosed convents; these do cling more closely to their beginnings.** For the Devil hath cast his nets over all the world, and all who take their food with the worms that creep on the earth, all such live an unclean life. And such are all who live according to the flesh, in sloth and gluttony and unchaste life or in other grievous sins; all these stick in the Devil's net. Yet shall God keep His chosen, in whatsoever estate or Order they be; for the Devil's net hath wide meshes; wherefore all slip through who are innocent and pure of sin, nor can it hold them; and such folk belong unto God, and the angels catch them and bear them to Abraham's bosom. But these need rather to live and to feed upon inward exercises than upon outward works."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare another passage (Surius, p. 147 a) where Ruysbroeck insists on the inferiority of any religious ideal which emphasizes contemplation and neglects good works to one's neighbours.

The *Chronicon Huxteriense* was written by Peter Visselbec, a Benedictine of Hoxter in Westphalia, who died in 1395. The author, under the year 1174, describes the past glories of Corbei, and the monks' regular life there; he adds:

**"Men of our day think that the habit and the tonsure make the monk;** prelates think they have done great things if only they can grow old in idleness, luxury, and lust, leaving the care of so many souls to a negligent prior or a furious schoolmaster. It was not so of old; good arts and tongues and Holy Scripture were then loved and taught, under strict discipline, by superiors and brethren. The superiors themselves preached the Word of God, and went among the nations, for they yearned to save them. The salvation of souls was all their care and intent and love. But now abbot and provost, dean and prior, though they be sometimes degenerate sons of a most vile rustic or shepherd, and evil in proportion to the baseness of their birth, yet they deem it beneath their dignity and eminence to stand in the pulpit and expound God's word to the people, or to do such like offices of piety. Nay, even though they would, many of them could not, for their want of education... **O, how is our Order turned topsy-turvy! how little is it Benedictus!**" (*Chron. Huxteriense in Paullini Syntagma*, Frankfurt a-M., 1698, p. 45).

Franco Sacchetti [1335-1400] was one of the best-known writers in medieval Florence, and equally distinguished in his own day as a statesman. Besides poetry and novels he wrote a few sermons, which are full of value for the social historian. In the fourth of these he says:

**"Most of the Religious follow after lechery, avarice, simony and gluttony;** and that is why Dante said: *O voi che sete in piccioletta barca, etc.*"

St Brigitta of Sweden [1302-73] was of royal race; in her widowhood she founded the convent of Wadstena (the parent-house of the English convent of Sion) and became famous for the divine revelations which she received. My references here are to the edition of Cardinal Turrecremata, Antwerp, 1611.

"In the days of St Benedict and the early fathers, monasteries were a light to mankind and beloved of God; good monks were then honoured by their fellows, and the bad reprobated, and then every man could see plainly, from the very habit, who was a monk. But, among many—*plerisque*—there hath now grown up a detestable abuse in contravention of this most honourable institution. For the abbots dwell too frequently in their castles, and wherever it pleaseth them within or without the city; wherefore it is painful now to visit the monasteries. For now we see **very few monks in choir at divine service, and sometimes none at all.** For therein<sup>1</sup> do men read little, and sometimes they chant not at all, and on many days even Mass is not said. **Good men are troubled at their ill-repute, and bad men are made far worse by their evil conversation;**

<sup>1</sup> Reading *ibi* for *ubi*, which makes no sense.

moreover, we must fear that few souls receive any consolation for their [purgatorial] pains from such men's prayers. For many of the monks' dwellings are in the city, and each hath his own lodging; and some of them, when their friends come to see them, embrace their own children with joy, saying 'This is my son'; moreover, **the monk of today can scarce be recognized even by his habit**... as though it were a disgrace to wear any monastic garment. Nay, some are not ashamed to bear a coat of mail and arms under their frocks, in order that, after nightfall, they may be able to do that wherein they delight." And so also with the friars, who had begun in such poverty; "it is now a misery to see that **their Rules also have been changed to detestable abuses**, and that they are by no means observed... For now you may find many men among the so-called rich who are poorer even in money and jewels than these men who have professed poverty, as common report says." As to the nuns, St Gregory and earlier saints enclosed them effectually, "so that they could scarce be seen in their lifetime. But now they have come to this grievous abuse, **that their doors are open, even by night itself, to clergy and laity, indiscriminately**, whomsoever it may please the sisters to admit. **Wherefore such convents resemble brothels rather than hallowed cloisters.**"<sup>1</sup> God, again, tells her how He had enticed her into monasticism by showing her at first only its attractive exterior, as we entice a child with an apple. So, "whereas I called thee from the perils of the world into this port of rest, therein those whom thou imaginest to be continent virgins are in truth lions in their wickedness. Whom thou believest sheep in divine contemplation, these creep on their bellies in gluttony and covetousness, like unto serpents."<sup>2</sup> Again, He tells her how He had inspired St Francis, but **the Devil presently breathed his own spirit into other friars**, so that "in truth it is so, that there are more friars in the world who in act or in will or in desire hold with the aforesaid Rule which the Devil taught to the enemy friar, than are those who keep that Rule which I myself taught to St Francis. Yet know that, although these brethren [God's and the Devil's] are mingled together so long as they live in this world, yet I will separate them after death; for I am their Judge, and will adjudge the friars who keep the Rule of St Francis to dwell with Me and with him in eternal glory; but those who keep the Rule of the contrary friar shall be adjudged to everlasting pain in the gulf of hell, if before death they will not correct themselves and humbly amend. Nor is there any marvel here; for those who ought to give worldly folk an example of humility and holiness, do in fact give them an example of baseness and ribaldry with their covetousness and pride"<sup>3</sup>. So again of Religious in general: "My [God's] friends used to enter monasteries through discreet fear and divine charity; but those who are now in monasteries go out into the world through pride and covetousness,

<sup>1</sup> *Revel.* lib. iv, c. 33, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* lib. vi, c. 14, p. 424.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* lib. vii, c. 20, p. 560.

self-willed and pamperers of their own bodies"—*facientes corporibus suis delectamenta*. **They are no longer God's soldiers but Satan's, and shall have the Devil's wages<sup>1</sup>.**

Rulman Merswin, [1307]–1382, remains a remarkable mystic even when we take account of the deductions made in recent times by Father Denifle (*Tauler's Bekehrung*, Strassburg, 1879) and Jundt (see J. J. Jusserand, *L'épopée mystique*, Hachette, 1893, p. 222, and cf. Jundt's earlier work *Les amis de Dieu*, Strassbourg, 1879). Merswin was a rich Strassburg banker, who, converted at the age of forty, founded a monastery near his native town and left to it a collection of his own mystical writings. It seems now to be proved that the "Friend of God" with whom he exchanged letters was really Merswin himself, who preferred thus to express his own thoughts pseudonymously. His *Book of the Nine Cliffs*, dealing with the soul's ascent Godwards, is, like that of his contemporary St Catharine of Siena, a dialogue between God and the soul. Surius translated it into Latin among the works of Suso, to whom he attributed it. My references are to this edition (p. 365), and to the original German as edited by C. Schmidt (*Das Buch v. d. Neun Felsen*, Leipzig, 1859, p. 24). After a few words of bitter complaint against abbots and abbesses who fight their way through conventual quarrels to the coveted offices, the dialogue thus proceeds:

"S. I am persuaded, O Lord God, that there are many of those friars still on the earth who are honourable folk. G. Thou sayest that **honourable friars are yet to be found; that I will not gainsay; but right few** and scant are they who confess the right way and follow it in their lives; and this is monstrous<sup>2</sup>. I will tell thee; the mass of friars that live in these days, if they had lived in earlier days, would never have been admitted to come and live in the cloisters, nor would men have suffered them to hear confessions. Know thou that the world is full of all falsity." The Soul complains of friars as flattering confessors: "they say that mankind has become more infirm than they were in ancient times, and that **we must not be so strict with them as of old**." To which God answers, "That is not true; it is false speech and false teaching and a false gloss; I will tell thee the truth; God never ordained that nature should be fortified by sin; that would be against right; God could not so do. S. Ah! love of my heart, the confessors think perchance that men cannot bear so great labour as of old, and that Nature is become too infirm. G. God biddeth no man do more than he can bear; and he biddeth us flee from sin." After a short interval, Merswin comes to the nunneries: "G. Look around and see how they live nowadays in the nunneries. I will tell thee; in days of old there was in the convents such an honourable and inward and earnest and holy life that he who saw them or spake with them was edified thereby. Now, I will tell thee, in these days things are come to such a pass that **he who is a true Christian man must flee from them**; for the truth is that their bearing and their words and their way of life are not so prudent nor so spiritual that one can be edified thereby; I will tell thee that **inward earnest spiritual life**

<sup>1</sup> *Revel.* lib. II, c. 7, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Das es omne mosse ist*; literally, "and this is beyond all measure."



is altogether forgotten by the nuns; they do indeed sing much with their lips and pray much with their lips, but their hearts are far from God. I must complain unto thee how we are come now to the pass that, if one will turn with full and fitting earnestness to eternal truth, **he is scorned and made a laughing-stock**, he and his way of life; and this is so **both in women's cloisters and in men's**.... Whether it be in men's or women's cloisters, they may well be reported for spiritual among men, but before the Lord they are called troublers of God, both men and women. But I will speak henceforth of the nunneries, and will tell thee that scant and few are the women therein who—if they looked on the matter with all seriousness, they would find that they were ever caught in the meshes of grievous deeds against God, and falling into great sins<sup>1</sup>—and I will tell thee wherein they are enmeshed. Some are caught in the sins of avarice, and some in pride, and some in wrath, and some in disobedience and some in unchastity; even granted that they bring it not to deed, yet they sin greatly in will, and partly with proud and unchaste dress and proud and unchaste bearing; and a part sin with secret hidden sins, the sins that we cannot well write; those who are there know well what I mean. Thus thou must know that very **many sorts of sins are done in these nunneries, both secretly and openly**, so that they are in a very perilous way. The royal way of inward spiritual life is so nearly ruined and forgotten in nunneries, that the truth is, right few nuns are holy in these days as many were holy of old, who are great saints before God to all eternity.... Look around and see, and mark well how sorely **all spiritual ordinances** are decayed, and inward spiritual life, and whereunto the name of Religious hath come, both in men's cloisters and in women's, whether they be closed or open, Mendicant Orders or other Orders. *S.* Ah, love of my heart! I trow that we may yet find monasteries which lead a right inward earnest life. *G.* That is indeed true; but thou must know that **earnest monasteries are right few and far between**, which is monstrous. *S.* My beloved, have mercy thereon; alas! beloved, how sorely am I afflicted with Thy words."

Merswin's words receive strong corroboration from the almost contemporary statutes of Bishop Berthold of Strassburg (1435)<sup>2</sup>. The bishop's 87th statute deals first with five nunneries in which women had grown accustomed to live without ever taking regular vows. Then,

"with regard to the nunneries of Erscheim and Andelache, which in their canonical Hours keep the Order of St Benedict, and to that of St Stephen, which in its Hours follows the Augustinian Order, which [three nunneries] **claim to have not kept the substantial of the Orders from time immemorial**, we do for the present omit any declaration of this kind [such as he had made for the other five] for

<sup>1</sup> I have tried to reproduce the irregular grammar into which Merswin's zeal betrays him.

<sup>2</sup> Martène, *Thes.* vol. IV, col. 549.

the sake of better deliberation; yet we advise them, for the sake of peace, under no penalty as yet, that they should study to keep the substantial of their Orders. Moreover we strictly forbid dancing to all the ladies of any nunnery whatsoever in our diocese, and specially in public, that is in the men's rooms which are called *Trinkstuben* [taverns], and at courts, and in the solemnities celebrated at tournaments or weddings. Let **any superior [prelata] who dances publicly henceforth in these taverns** and courts incur the sentence of *ipso facto* excommunication, and any nun, that of suspension for a month from the reception of her prebend." The bishop then deals in detail with the worldly dress and ornaments of these ladies, and adds: "Moreover, let all who go forth from their convents without licence from their superior, or who insult their superiors with contumelious words, as according to the report of the said superiors is frequently done, be suspended from their prebends until they have come humbly to their superior and amended their fault by her pardon."

William of Wykeham (1324-1404), bishop of Winchester and founder of the colleges there and at Oxford, wrote in the postscript to his statutes for Winchester College:

"In my time I have diligently inspected divers approved traditions of ancient fathers and rules of saints, and manifold professors of such traditions and rules, but I am sorry to say **nowhere have I found such rules, ordinances, and statutes observed now as of old according to the Founders' intentions**. . . . Seeing which, I have thought that it might be better for me to divide my goods of this world among the poor with my own hands rather than to give them to the trust of fools through the course of ages" (A. F. Leach, *Winch. Coll.* 1899, p. 74).

The best English biography of St Catharine of Siena is that of Prof. E. G. Gardner (1907). A more recent study (R. Fawtier, *Ste C. de S., essai de critique des sources*, Paris, 1921) has compelled us to reconsider much, and to doubt some of the most plausible sources for her biography; but his criticism does not affect the historical value of what she tells us in her *Dialogue*. The interlocutors here, as in so many other medieval mystical books, are God and the writer's soul. They are all the more significant because St Catharine had as deep a reverence for the priestly office as St Francis himself. My translations are from the standard text of Gigli (1707) for which see Gardner, *l.c.* pref. p. xv. In her 110th chapter, she comes to speak of the dignity of the Eucharist, and of the priest as minister of that Sacrament. The sacramental virtue is not diminished by the minister's guilt (ch. 115). Moreover, the civil power has no right to punish guilty ministers: *Touch not mine Anointed* (chs. 115, 116). Those who break this rule persecute Holy Church (ch. 117). God says to her: "What these men do to them [the priests], I hold as done unto Me; for I told them, and I say now, that I will not have them touch Mine anointed; it is I and not they, who have to punish them. . . . And therefore this sin is more grievous unto Me than all others. . . . And at last, if they amend not themselves by holy confession and heartfelt contrition, they come to everlasting damnation." Vain is their plea that they are correcting the defects of Christ's ministers; that cloak shall be torn from them at the Last Day. Thus we pass on to chapter 119; *Of the Excellence and Virtues and holy*

*Operations of virtuous and holy Ministers; and how such men are like unto the Sun; and concerning their correction of their flocks.* In this and the next, Christ deals at length with the excellence and glories of virtuous priests and their sacraments. This, He says, is "in order to give a little refreshment to thy soul." But the first thing that a careful reader will note is, that the syntax here changes; nearly all the verbs are now in the past tense; it is of the earlier Church that God is now speaking; "they *had* the condition of the Sun, so that the stench may be tempered with the scent of their virtues, and the darkness with their light; moreover, by that light I will that thou know the darkness better, and the defects of My ministers of whom I have spoken to thee"<sup>1</sup>. When the subject of discipline comes up, she interrupts herself with: "But nowadays men do not so," and describes the disciplinary confusion of her own days in the words I have quoted in my text (ch. XXIII, p. 340). And so on through two long chapters: the sacraments are the very foundation of Christian life, and unspeakable is the glory of those whose purity of life once used to rival the excellence of the sacraments which they administered. There are only two passages, comparatively brief, which strike a discordant note; one has already been mentioned, and the other comes at the end, where Christ reminds her again that, when priests fall short of that which priests used to be, the layman's duty is not to punish them but to pray for their amendment. On this note we come to a sudden transition of thought, and plunge into chapter 121:

*"Of the Defects and evil Life of wicked Priests and Ministers.*

"Hearken now, dearest daughter; for, in order that thou and my other servants may have more matter to offer humble and continual prayer unto Me, on their behalf, **I will now show and tell thee their wicked [*scelerata*] life; though indeed, on whatsoever side thou mayest turn, both to secular [*clergy*] and Religious and Prelates small and great, old and young, and of all other sorts, thou seest naught else but offences, and all stink in My nostrils with a stench of mortal sin;** which stench doth in no wise hurt or harm Me, but themselves. Hitherto I have rehearsed unto thee the excellence of my ministers, and the virtues of good [*clergy*], partly to refresh thy soul and partly in order that thou shouldest better know the wretchedness of those wretches, and shouldest see how much greater is the rebuke that they earn, and how much more intolerable the pains that they deserve; even as mine Elect and Beloved, having dealt virtuously with the treasure given unto them, are worthy of a greater reward, and are set as pearls in My sight, so is it contrariwise with these wretches, for they shall receive cruel pains. Know thou, dearest daughter, and mark it with grief and bitterness of heart, where they have laid their foundation and their first principle. They have laid it in Self-love, whence is sprung the tree of Pride and its offshoot of Indiscretion; for, as indiscreet folk, they take honour and glory to themselves, seeking great prelacies, with pomp and bodily delicacy; while to Me they render scorn and offence, thus taking to themselves that which is not theirs, and giving Me that which is not Mine. To Me should be glory, and praise unto My Name; and to

<sup>1</sup> p. 189: compare this with pp. 236-7, where she marks still more plainly the contrast that she is concerned to describe between past and present.

themselves they should render hatred for their own sensuality, and true knowledge of what they are, holding themselves unworthy of this great ministry which they have received from Me. Yet they do the contrary; for they, as puffed up with pride, are never satisfied with gnawing at the earth, to wit, at the riches and delights of this world; **narrow, greedy, and avaricious to the poor**; through which wretched pride and avarice, born of their own sensual self-love, **they have abandoned the cure of souls**, and set themselves wholly to keep and care for worldly things, leaving my flock which I have committed to their hands, like sheep without a shepherd; for they lead them not to pasture, nor feed them either spiritually or temporally. Spiritually they do minister the Sacraments of Holy Church, which cannot be abolished by any defect of theirs, nor their virtue diminished. But they feed not your hunger with heartfelt prayers, nor with holy and honest life for any desire of your salvation. Nor do they feed their flocks with worldly things; I speak of the poor and of Church revenues, whereof, as I said unto you, three parts should be made, one for the needs of the clergy, one for the poor, and one for the maintenance of the Church. These men do the contrary; for **not only do they not distribute** these revenues which they are bound by right to give unto the poor, **but they rob others** through simony and greed of gain, and sell the grace of the Holy Ghost; for oftentimes they are such as are so niggardly that they will not give to him who needs them even those things which I have given by grace, in order that they may distribute them unto you [*i.e.* the Church sacraments] unless their hands be filled, and they themselves receive many gifts; and they love their flocks in so far as they get gain from them, and no farther. All the Church goods they spend on naught but on bodily garments, and on going in delicate attire not as clerks or Religious but as lords and esquires of the court; and they study to get fat palfreys, and many vessels of gold and silver, with household adornments, and possessions which cannot be held without much vanity of heart. And their hearts speak to them with disordered vanity; and all their desire is in food and drink, **making a god of their belly, eating and drinking in disorderly fashion; and thence they fall forthwith into filth, living in lasciviousness**. Woe, woe unto their wretched life; for that which My Son, the sweet Word Incarnate, won with such pains upon the wood of Holy Cross, that they spend with public harlots, and are devourers of souls that had been bought with Christ's blood, devouring them most miserably in many and manifold ways, and **feeding their children with the substance of the poor**. O temples of devils! I have set you to be earthly angels in this life, and ye are demons, and have taken unto yourselves the office of demons! . . . Thus these wretches are not worthy to be called ministers, **they are devils incarnate**<sup>1</sup>. . . . They bring confusion and pain into

<sup>1</sup> Dionysius Carthusianus, nearly a century later, quotes with approval St Catharine's condemnation of the clergy, and especially this sentence (*Opusc.* p. 88).

the minds of those created beings who see their disorderly life; they are ministers of pain and confusion of conscience to those whom they oftentimes withdraw from the state of grace and the way of truth, and, leading them to guilt, they make them walk by the way of falsehood; albeit he who followeth them be not therefore excused from his guilt, because none may constrain him to the guilt of mortal sin, whether it be one of these visible devils or of the invisible; for no man ought to look unto their lives nor to do as they do. . . .”

“122. *How, among these Ministers aforesaid, Injustice reigns, and specially through want of correction of their flocks. . . .*

“Wherefore, through their defects, the Blood [of Christ] has become vile; that is, **layfolk lose the due reverence which they should pay to that Blood**, although they ought not so to do; and, if I forgive them, their guilt is none the less for the defects of their pastors; but yet these wretches are a mirror of wretchedness, whereas I had set them to be a mirror of virtue.

“123. *Of many other Defects of the aforesaid Ministers, and notably of their tavern-haunting and Gambling and keeping of Concubines.*

“124. *How, among the aforesaid Ministers, reigns the Vice against Nature; and of a fair Vision which this Soul saw concerning this matter.*

“125. *How, through the said defects, their flocks amend themselves; and of the defects of Religious; and how, for lack of amendment of the evils aforesaid, many others ensue.*

“How can these men, full of so many defects, correct and do justice and reprove the defects of their subjects? They cannot, because their own defects deprive them of all fire and zeal for holy justice. . . . Why do they not correct? Because they are blinded by self-love, which is the foundation-stone of all their iniquities; and they look for nothing but how they may fulfil their disordered desires and pleasures—all alike, subjects and pastors, clerics and Religious. Alas! my sweet daughter, where is the obedience of the Religious? and **what are these men, set in Holy Religion as angels, and they are worse than demons?** They are set to preaching the Word in doctrine and in truth; and they cry only with the sound of the voice, so that they make no fruit in their hearers’ hearts. Their preaching is rather to please men, and to tickle their ears, than to honour Me; and therefore they study not in good life but in highly-polished talk. They sow not My seed in truth, because they are not careful to pluck up vices and to plant virtues; wherefore, not having uprooted the thorns from their own garden, they care not to uproot them from their neighbour’s. All their delight is in adornment of their own bodies or cells, and to run about the city; and it befalleth them as it befalleth the fish, which dieth out of the water. Thus these Religious, living in vain and dishonest life without their cells, die of the separation from those cells which should be their heaven. They go about the country, seeking the houses of their own kin and of other worldly folk, according as it pleases themselves, the wretched subjects, and the evil superiors who have tied them not short, but with a long rope. And as these wretched superiors care

naught for seeing their inferior Brethren in the hands of devils, so it cometh often to pass that they put them in the devil's hand. **And sometimes, knowing that they are demons incarnate, they send them from convent to convent, to women who are demons incarnate as well as themselves;** and thus one ruins the other with many subtle devices and deceits. The devil begins with them under colour of devotion; but, because their life is wanton and wretched, it does not long maintain this colour of devotion; therefore it is not long before their devotions bear fruit. First appear the stinking flowers of un honest thoughts, with the rotten leaves of words; and in miserable fashion they fulfil their lusts; and the fruits which appear are such as I know well you have seen, children to wit. And oftentimes they go so far together that **both go forth from Holy Religion, and he is become a ruffian, and she a public harlot.** All these evils, and many more, come by reason of the superiors, since they keep no watch over their subjects, but give them a free rein, and they themselves have willed it, and made as though they saw not their wretched ways because the subjects had no pleasure in their cells; and thus, by the fault of both, [the Religious] is dead. Thy tongue could not tell all their defects, nor in what miserable ways they offend Me... They have vowed to keep the Order, and they violate it. **And, not only do they themselves not keep it, but they fall like famished wolves upon those lambs who would fain keep the Rule,** mocking them and making them a laughing-stock; for these wretches think, with the persecutions and mockeries and derision which they heap upon good Religious such as observe the Order, to cloak their own defects, which indeed they discover all the more. **All this evil is come into the garden of the holy Religions; yet they are holy in themselves, as being made and founded by the Holy Ghost;** wherefore the Order itself cannot be ruined or corrupted, whether by superiors or by subjects. Therefore he who would fain enter into the Order must not look unto those who are evil, but must swim upon the arms of the Order, which is not weak, nor cannot weaken, obeying it even unto death...

"Again, they vow voluntary poverty; how do they keep this? Regard the possessions, and the hoards of money which they hold in private, apart from the common charity of sharing all their worldly and spiritual substance with the Brethren, even as the Order of Charity demandeth, and their own Order. They are not willing to fatten any other than themselves and their beasts; and one beast nourisheth another, while his poor Brother is dying of cold and hunger; for [the possessionate Religious] is well lined, and hath good victuals; he thinketh not of the other, nor will he sit by him in the refectory; his delight is to be able to sit where he can fill himself with flesh-food, and satisfy his gluttony. **For such a man it is impossible to keep the third vow, of continence;** for a full belly maketh no chaste mind; thus they become wanton with disorderly enjoyments, and thus they go from evil to evil. For much evil cometh from possession;

because, if they had not wherewith to spend they would not live in so disorderly fashion, nor have curious friendships; because, when a man has nothing to give, there is no room for that love or friendship which is founded upon love of gifts and upon the delight and pleasure that one draws from another, and not upon perfect charity.

"O wretches, set in such wretchedness by their own defects, where I had set them in so great worthiness! **They flee from choir-service as from poison**; or, if they stay there crying aloud, their heart is far from Me. To My table of the altar they have become accustomed to approach without any disposition whatsoever, even as to a bodily table. All these evils, **and others whereof I will not speak lest I poison thine ears**<sup>1</sup>, follow from the fault of evil pastors, who correct not nor punish their subjects, and who care not nor are zealous for the observance of the Order, because they themselves keep it not. . . . And therefore, to those who deserve grace and lovingkindness, they give penance and hate, and to those who, like themselves, are limbs of Satan, they give love and delight and rank, committing unto them the offices of the Order. They live as blind men, and as blind they apportion the offices and rule their subjects; and, if they amend not, they go down in this blindness to the darkness of everlasting damnation, and they must render Me account, as Supreme Judge, for the souls of their subjects.

"126. *How, in the said wicked Ministers, there reigneth the sin of Lechery.*

"127. *How in the said Ministers reigneth Avarice; how they lend at Usury; and in especial how they buy and sell Benefices through Prelacies; and of the evils which this greed hath brought into Holy Church.*

"128. *How in the said ministers reigneth Pride, whereby they lose knowledge; and how, having lost knowledge, they fall into this fault, that they seem to consecrate and consecrate not.*

"129. *Of many other Faults which they commit through Pride and Self-love.*

"130. *Of many other Faults committed by the said wicked Ministers."*

The Fourth Part of St Catharine's *Dialogue* (chapters 154 ff.) treats of Obedience. In chapters 158 ff. she comes to speak of the abstract excellence of Religious Orders. Monasticism is like a ship in the waves of this troubled world:

"The captain of this vessel is the Holy Ghost, who in Himself never faileth through the fault of any Religious cloisterer, who violates his Order" (p. 298). In the days when the Orders lived in the flower of virtue and in true poverty, they lacked for nothing (p. 299). But now "through their defects, **they are multiplied in numbers and diminished in virtue; not through any fault of the Vessel, but through disobedient subjects and evil superiors**" (p. 300).

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to chapter 124: "*How among the aforesaid ministers there reigns unnatural vice.*"

"Moreover, they pervert to darkness the light of knowledge, with the cloud of pride; not that this light receiveth darkness into itself, but in so far as their souls are concerned. Where is pride, there can be no obedience. . . and, when the vow of obedience is broken, it is seldom that the vow of continence is not broken, either in thought or in deed" (p. 301). "Now I will speak unto thee of the obedience and the disobedience of those who are in this Vessel, speaking unto thee of all together and not in particular; that is, no longer speaking unto thee of one Order more than of any other" (p. 302). Those who neglect the vow of poverty fall presently into disobedience, and thence, gradually, through worldly friendships and freedom, into incontinence (p. 303) "because they have money to spend, which if they had not, they would lack occasion of mental or bodily impurity. For if sometimes either through shame, or for want of opportunity, they abstain from bodily sin, they will not abstain in mind; since it would be impossible for those who are in many conversations, and in bodily comfort, and immoderate in their food, and without watchings and prayers, to keep their minds pure" (p. 304). Of the disobedient Religious it may be said that "every will of his is discordant from the will of his Order. This commands obedience, and he loveth disobedience; this commands voluntary poverty, and he flees therefrom, possessing riches and setting his heart upon them; this demands continence and purity, and he loveth impurity. Daughter, when the Religious transgresseth these three vows, he falleth into ruin, and into such wretched faults that **he hath no longer the figure of a Religious, but of a devil incarnate**" (p. 309). And now: "O dearest daughter, how many such are there who, in these days, are fed in this Vessel? **Many; and few are they on the other side**, to wit, the obedient. It is true that, between the perfect on one side and these wretches on the other, **there are many of those who commonly live in the Order; who are neither perfect, as they should be, nor wicked**; that is, who keep their conscience pure from mortal sin, but are lukewarm and cold in heart" (p. 313). The sinner may, by a sudden revulsion, repent; "but these lukewarm, who do neither great evil nor great good, know not how cold they are, nor in what doubt they stand; not knowing, they care not to arise, nor that any man should show them how; and, if it be shown them, yet, by reason of their coldness of heart, they remain frostbound in their long custom and wont. . . Truly may we say to them that word: 'Cursed are the lukewarm; would that thou wert cold; if thou amend not, I will spue thee out of my mouth'" (p. 314).

We shall see a few pages later how, two generations after St Catharine, her words of burning indignation were approved and adopted by one of the most learned and pious churchmen of the day, Dionysius Carthusianus. It was therefore necessary to quote at great length here, in order to expose one of those impositions which are too often put upon the public where a religious party feels its own reputation compromised by too naked facts.



The Dominican John Bromyard, a noted adversary of Wyclif, wrote his great *Summa Predicantium*, an encyclopaedia for the use of preachers, in about 1390. It enjoyed great popularity in the Middle Ages, and has been reprinted as late as the seventeenth century. Under the heading *Paupertas* he contrasts the real poverty of early Religious with what is often their simulated poverty in his own day:

"If [the founders of Religious Orders] were now confronted on earth with [those who call themselves their successors] in such a life and such a habit and so forth as are now in use, and if we asked them: **'Whose is this image and superscription?'** each would answer **for his own part: 'Not mine;** for I was poor in deed and in outward show.' Moreover we have good reason to fear that it will be thus also at the day of death. [The Dominicans, founded scarce more than 200 years ago, have changed more than the Benedictines in the last 500 years. The contributions of the poor are sometimes spent in luxurious feasts; their extravagance has a double disadvantage; for] the more they are impoverished, and the less they can give, the more is exacted from them; for in modern times, since the charity of many grows cold, and benefactors fail or die or decrease, the custom has begun of greater display, and heavier and more expensive superfluities in horses and doctorate-feasts [at the universities] and contributions [to working expenses of the Order; therefore conventual books and ornaments go to pawn, and buildings to disrepair]. If any man should reflect in his own mind concerning this destruction and distortion [*abusione*] of this new Order [of Dominicans], how this Order of certain Religious became suddenly so excellently exalted and famous, by reason of its science and humility and other virtues, that by its wisdom it ruled the pope and emperors and kings and well-nigh the whole world, so long as it kept its estate duly; and again how, after it climbed upon horseback and affected vanities and unfitting superfluities, it fell down to the depths... then he might compose more sorrowful lamentations concerning the destruction and spiritual confusion of certain Religious than did Jeremiah concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews. But alas! not all men lament this plague, but only those who have seen or have heard of earlier Religion; whereas others rejoice in this [change]"<sup>1</sup>.

He deals much more fully with the subject under the rubric *Religio*<sup>2</sup>. Here his words are all the more noteworthy because he deprecates, again and again, all hasty generalizations from a few unfavourable instances, and severely condemns all who attempt to hold postulants back from entering Religion<sup>3</sup>. Most of this long article is, naturally enough, concerned with the essential beauty of the monastic ideal, its full apostolic pedigree (which, of course, was believed by practically all medieval theologians), and its beneficial effects on society wherever it was efficient. But Bromyard nowhere commits himself to the assertion or even the implication that monasticism in his own time, as

<sup>1</sup> P. iii, §§ 23-32.

<sup>2</sup> R. v, *in toto*.

<sup>3</sup> Esp. §§ 3, 7, 14, 34, 35, 37; cf. D. vi, § 25.

apart from the distant past, can be defended as predominantly efficient. On the contrary, towards the end of the article, he draws a still more unfavourable contrast than that which he has drawn in his article *Paupertas*. "Many men, seeing that Religious and ecclesiastics are opulent and honoured, think that they will be happy if they also can be such—so rich, so honoured—and can escape from the labours of the world; and with this intention, [like asses,] they put on the lion's skin; that is, the Religious or ecclesiastical habit" (§ 5). "[The possessions of Religious] are like a shadow; for, even as the shadow followeth a man as he fleeth, and fleeth from him as he followeth, even so, when Religious were truly poor, and fled heartily from the world's riches and honours, then spiritual goods followed them so fast that they abounded in all possessions; for then possessions were given to them by the very men whose heirs would now gladly take them away, if they could... since those who gave to the truly poor... seeing them dressed in rich garments, and conforming themselves in other curious things to worldly folk, withdraw their gifts from them (§ 38)... Men who in the world were wont to have old or vile garments, now in Religion strive to get new or precious apparel" (§ 39). They are ambitious and disobedient, and are fallen from that learning which once made them the glory of the universities (§§ 49, 50). But the saddest decay is in the ideal of poverty (§ 51). "For **those who should be the fathers of the poor**, and leaders of the heavenly army, and a model to the flock in good works and works of penitence, while their companions are busied with bloodshed and slaughter, **these men covet delicate food and enjoy morning sleep**. While others (I say) press on by night and day, with watchful care, to redeem the time, because the days are evil, working not only in many but also in healthy ways, and continuing in labour unto life's eventide, these, on the contrary, spend long nights in slumber and waste their idle days in gossip; they feast in hidden corners, adding dish to dish, while those who bear the burden and heat of the day suffer penury." Finally, there are scandalously luxurious feasts to celebrate a Dominican's reception of his university degree (§ 53). "Who would not call this name of poverty vain, when inceptions are celebrated with such pomp and outlay? Many are called to the inceptor's banquet... When the man's fame, however empty, is widespread, then men flock in from the whole province; they cover the earth like locusts: the hostels are filled; news is reported; there are party-disputes; friends are honoured and enemies are scandalized; all are in amazement; noble folk shake their heads to see that such feasts<sup>1</sup> are made by these poor folk as they themselves could not hope to make without great expense, and say that these men abuse the name of poverty in their pride, and that there is the less truth in their claim to poverty. For a certain nobleman was wont to argue, **either that they were liars in calling themselves poor, or that they were thieves, who had acquired so great sums by**

<sup>1</sup> Bromyard here uses, in derision, the Biblical word for the passover feast, *Phase*; cf. Exod. xii, 43, Vulg.

**robbery.** But when they are met for divine service the greatness of their negligence plainly appears, since **very few—paucissimi—deign to vouchsafe their bare presence to the holy vigils [of matins] and to the holy solemnities of Mass, seeming to congregate rather for play and laughter and giggling than for psalmody;** whereat the evil or the dissolute mock, but the devout mourn. I will say plainly, as one who mourneth, . . . if I am allowed to say it, that **they are consumed in gluttony and drunkenness, in [soft] couches, not to say in uncleanness, so that now the assemblies of clerics are thought to be brothels of wanton folk and congregations of play-actors;** for there laxity is called comradeship; waste is called liberality; loquacity, affability; giggling and derision, pleasantry; luxury and splendour of garments, decency. If it is for this that they drain their friends' purses, if it is thus that they dissipate the generosity of princes, the alms of the poor, nay, the blood of the Spotless Lamb, may we not then say: 'Your assemblies are wicked' (Is. i, 13)? But when worldly folk marvel much, asking: 'How is such pomp among the prophets?' they know not how the bellies of gluttons are thus served from the funds of the needy; how the book and the coat of him who goes and gives is pawned or sold, and how money is borrowed, lest the man, contributing nothing, might seem an enemy to Caesar<sup>1</sup>, and in order that the receiver may not forget the gift, **and may uphold [the giver] some future day in his indiscipline,** or may promote him undeservedly. And thus, while the wicked grows proud, the poor is burned, and these books are sold or pawned which the ancient holy fathers, predecessors [of these men], had gathered. For if any duplicates are found in the library, one must needs be sold for the use of this [new] inceptor, though it belongs to the convent; and, since these books are not duplicated again in his time, they make things easy for his successors<sup>2</sup>, who are preserved to all eternity from the troubles of such selling. For God's sake, if they are not ashamed of these follies, why do they not shrink from the expense and the trouble and the pains to come?<sup>3</sup> **What will it profit them to have quitted men's vanities in the world, if they yet suffer these devils' vanities in the monastery?** For there is little or no choice between receiving their [final] portion with men of iniquity, or with demons; since both alike shall be damned to everlasting fire. Moreover, if any man speak of extirpating this error, then they say: 'God forbid! that would be unseemly; it would be out of joint with these times, unsuited to our Order; note how great is our repute in the Schools!' The last thing they think of is God's pleasure or honour; little do they stick at the loss of souls and the ruin of monastic buildings and the

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* to the great man whose banquet is on foot. On the occasion of these great celebrations, the lukewarm contributor or refuser might be counted as hostile.

<sup>2</sup> Here, and in one or two other places, the text seems slightly corrupted, but the general sense is clear enough.

<sup>3</sup> An echo from St Bernard.

penury of the [ordinary] brethren; unless, indeed, we say that whatsoever is lofty tendeth to salvation, and whatsoever savours of glory is also righteous. Truly, meanwhile, men may well wonder that they are blind to the causes of their error. Since the brethren are endowed with regular authority to correct vices, then with what assurance, with what spirit, or with what purpose do they wink at such enormous and notorious faults, and leave them uncorrected? unless indeed (if we may say so) no man confidently rebukes that wherein he cannot trust himself as free from blame; indeed it is a human quality to feel no vehement anger against others for that wherein we indulge ourselves. Therefore, those whose lives ought to have been a way of life do now show an example of errors in their deeds, and **are now become blind leaders of the blind; and, where all are filthy, the stench of any one is little felt.** O senseless prelates, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? (Gal. iii, 1). Where now is Levi's sword, and Simeon's zeal, and the fervour of Moses, who spared not the sins of his own folk? where is the dagger of Phineas, whose holy zeal appeased the angry God? Be ye zealous therefore, O fathers [of this Order], for the ways of the Lord and the righteousness of our God, while there is yet time to act, in order that those men may be withstood whose pomp dissipates and tarnishes your good estate. Thus, indeed, will ye do no little to promote your own renown and the profit of the Order, and ye will put to silence the tongues of wicked men. If they refuse to cease from these moral errors, it will end in men's derision; God will cast them off; and, if they are hardened in their ways, we must fear their eternal damnation. That men's derision will follow, is plain enough; for all men mark when a man in choice attire and pompous trappings bursts forth into public from the hiding-place of poverty... But they will plead that times are changed, and mankind is grown worse, and charity is grown cold in many men's hearts; and therefore in these days contributions must be made both for certain convents and for certain persons who go to distant places. To this it will be answered that, as times are worse for those that beg for the contributions, so also for those from whom they beg... Moreover, these persons sent afar would need no contribution if they followed in the footsteps of the ancient fathers, who adorned not only the Order but the whole Church also, by begging and journeying on foot... **How can we marvel that they receive no free gifts when they seek nothing for the love of God, but seek the fairest lodging and the strongest wine for the love of money?** even as we sometimes see them refuse hospitality freely offered, because of their horses and servants with whom they wish to abide in the town... If in these matters they were spending their parents' goods, or their own, the evil would be tolerable; but they pay from the goods of their brethren. For there seems little difference between those who walk on the wide way [of the world] and those who profess to walk another way, so long as they come to the same goal; for **they take the children's bread and cast it unto their**

horses<sup>1</sup>....Must we not say unto them 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees!'—I omit the word *hypocrites*, for hypocrisy goeth not on horseback....**Who would not lament that so holy and so noted an Order should have come to these evils**; an Order than which none [was] more like unto the orders of angels for beauty of chastity and ardour of charity! These, of old, crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences; they preached with Paul and laboured with Martha; and, with Mary and the angels, they contemplated God's face. But alas! how is the gold become dim and the finest colour changed from that earlier splendour! for the enemies have seen her, and mocked at her sabbaths; for, **instead of the sweet smell of virtues, there is given unto her the stench of vices**, and for the curled hair of heavenly beauty, the baldness of foulest nakedness. All that honoured her have despised her, because they have seen her shame, and the boar out of the wood hath laid her waste. But, in writing these things, **I speak against no Order**; for, as Bernard saith in his *Apology* [to Guillaume de St-Thierry] even though these things seem to be done in the Order, yet no order receiveth anything disorderly; [in that case] it is no order; wherefore **I must be considered to dispute not against the Orders, but in defence of order**, so long as I reprehend not the Order among men, but the vices of men. O! how far are we from those monks who lived in Antony's time!... When you come together into one place (that I may quote St Paul's words), it is not now to eat the Lord's supper. For there is none who seeketh the bread of heaven, nor any that giveth it; **there is no talk of the Scriptures or of the salvation of souls, but trifles and laughter and idle speech**; and, at your meals, your ears are as full-fed with gossip as your gullets with feasting. Over these men's heads, and over those of their companions, by reason of their companionship, hangs the penalty and peril of unwilling poverty; and in future there remains for them alone a harder affliction of vengeance. [**Let them think of Belshazzar, and the writing on the wall.**] But, nevertheless, none of them fear these penalties aforesaid; for, as many vices as they have, so many cloaks have they to hide their vices, even as the Devil hath."

Moreover, Bromyard refers us from this searching criticism of his own Dominican Order to a still severer judgement upon the Orders in general. In R. v, § 4 he tells us to apply directly to "many" Religious of his day a well-known apologue which in O. vi, § 20 he has repeated concerning the Church as a whole.

"The state of the modern Church and Christendom is well shown in a certain story to the effect that, as a certain man thought and marvelled concerning the state of Christendom, there appeared to him by night a certain image, as of a most fair lady. When he marvelled who she might be, then (it is said) a voice came unto him asking: 'Whose image thinkest thou this to be?' 'The most blessed Virgin Mary,'

<sup>1</sup> Bromyard repeats this in his *Tractatus Juris*, s.v. *Religio*.

quoth he. At these words the image turned her back upon him, which was altogether rotten. Then said the voice: 'What thinkest thou now? this is not the Virgin Mary, of whom it is written that she is altogether fair.' Then, as he would fain learn who she might be, the voice said: 'This is the similitude of Christendom, which at first was most fair, but in the latter parts she is now most foul and almost ruined.' And, that the cause of this ruin is in a great measure the sin and neglect of the clergy, is elegantly signified and shown in 2 Maccabees vi [verses 4 and 5]. So, now, is not the temple of the Church 'full of riot and revelling,' since those who serve that temple are full of those vices, whose sin is 'as the sin of Sodom, fulness of bread and idleness'? For they commonly abound more in meat and drink than men of the people, and are more idle, **not knowing how to occupy themselves usefully either in bodily or in spiritual things**; wherefrom follow the vices aforesaid. Moreover, 'the altar is now filled with unlawful things'; cannot we call unlawful and unclean that mouth and hands of an evil priest, which he lays on the altar and wherewith he even touches unworthily the Body of Christ? And by this error they deceive not only themselves but others also for whom they celebrate [reference to M. x, § 2]. We read farther [in Maccabees] 'and women thrust themselves of their accord into the holy places.' For what places are holy, if not the buildings of ecclesiastics, which now not only women, but such as might be more truly specialized as harlots, do not only enter but dwell therein by day and by night? Wherefore, seeing and considering these things, it is no marvel if the temple of the Church and of all spiritual Christianity tend to ruin." [Here again he ends with a warning of vengeance; the Turks have already conquered a great part of Christendom, and worse may be yet to come; cf. also C. iv, § 22.] And he comes to another side of this subject in his article *Elemosina*. Rich folk are commonly foolish before God; they give **their putrid food to the poor, and their useless brood to God**: "If they have a son or daughter crookbacked or otherwise deformed, they say, 'this one ought to be put into the cloister.'... If any great man's son were to enter into Religion, all his friends and kinsfolk are [*sic*] angry; they rage, saying that he is ruined; and they strive to draw him out" (E. III, § 26).

In his much briefer (and later?) *Tractatus Juris civilis et canonici*, Bromyard repeats some of this with variations. I quote from Brit. Mus. MS. Royal 10, C. x f. 123 a, s.v. *Religio*.

"Many" Religious are in pecuniary difficulties "for several causes." "First, because **in many places the cause for which God gave them abundance no longer exists**, as is evident from canon law (*Decret. Greg. l. i, tit. x, c. 2*). It is right therefore that the founder of a house of Religion or a charity, who founds it that it may have a certain number of persons serving God in that house, if they fail, brings against them, before the king at Westminster, a bill called *Cessavit per biennium* ['It has ceased for two years'], that he may

seize the whole into his own hands until they do what they owe to God, or at least he attacks them in other ways; just so then does God act." The second cause of present financial difficulties is the frequent absence or vacancy of superiors. "*The third*, because [Religious] **do not feed the Lord through hospitality to the poor, but rather deceive them**<sup>1</sup>. *Fourthly*, because they do not live reasonably—*rationabiliter*<sup>2</sup>—as they ought. [Earlier, f. 122 b, he has compared them with knighthood, an Order founded originally to serve the king in battle, but now, in this latter fourteenth century, debased by trade and commercialism.] So also are the spiritual knights [*i.e.* Religious], some of whom turn to merchandise, others to hunting, others, worse still, to fights and seditions; some to seek their own profit rather than that of the community.... Some indeed diligently seek what pertaineth to themselves, and not that which pertaineth to Jesus Christ, by whom they are sustained."

John Gower was a little older than Chaucer, and outlived him by eight years: he was probably by birth a Kentish squire. With Chaucer, he shows wider reading than any lay author in England before him. His *Mirour de l'Omme* and *Vox Clamantis* review all classes of society, and criticize with great plainness the corruptions which the author saw around him. The fact that much of his material is borrowed from earlier Anglo-Latin poets need not concern us greatly here; a serious man does not adopt quotations unless he approves them; and Gower tells us more than once that he speaks less for himself than as the mouthpiece of society around him. In the *Mirour* he writes (lines 21, 133 ff.):

"But now it is otherwise than of old; dan Charity hath no refuge left, for dan Envy hath slain him, and dan Hate is come, and hath prevented dan Unity from ever resting in our convent. Dan Patience is gone mad, dan Obedience hath departed, for dan Pride hath taken him from us, and dan Murmur hath secretly accepted the profession of dan Evil-mouth, who hath confounded well-nigh the whole Order. **Dan Unchaste shall go from manor to manor at his own pleasure, taking with him dan Incontinence**; then shall come dan Delicate to give them full evidence; through the spendings of these three come Poverty and Indigence, and Ruin in their train, whose presence blighteth the manors wherethrough he passeth like a pestilence. Even as the monks, so also the Canons [Regular] keep not their canonical Rule; both keep the form of Religion, but not the matter.... For final government, **dan Vice is abbot at present**, wherefore dan Gluttony and dan Sloth are made his chaplains now by common consent; and thus dan Vainglory taketh the vows, and is our abbot's confessor. Dan Avarice hath the wealth, and will by no means suffer dan Almsgiving to make his largesse; hence cometh the end of dan Conscience, who of old was wont to keep the convent. If we look farther, at the estate of the friars mendicant, then—I speak not of

<sup>1</sup> The printed edition of this book, entitled *Incipit Opus Trivium* (B.M. 1, B. 2986) adds here "through a sophism."

<sup>2</sup> The print here has *ex toto*, "altogether."

myself, but of what men commonly say—**this Order goeth from bad to worse even beyond all the rest**"<sup>1</sup>.

As to the *Vox Clamantis*, I cannot do better than reprint the summary made by its excellent editor, G. C. Macaulay (*The Works of John Gower*, vol. iv, Oxford, 1892, pp. xlvii ff.).

"Liber Quartus

**"Cap. I. Men of Religious Orders are also of various conditions, some good and others bad.** Let each bear his own burden of blame; I write only what common report tells me. There are first those who hold temporal possessions, and some of these live in gluttony and luxury. **Cap. II.** Those who leave the world should give up worldly things; but in these days the monk is known only by his garb. He indulges himself with the richest food and the choicest drink, he makes haste when the bell rings for a meal, but he rises very slowly and reluctantly for midnight prayer. The monks of old were different; they dwelt in caves and had no luxurious halls or kitchens, they were clothed in skins, fed on herbs and drank water, and abstained from fleshly lusts. These men truly renounced the world, but that blessed state has now perished. **Cap. III. The old monastic rule has given place to gluttony and drunkenness, and those who live so can hardly be chaste.** Pride, anger and envy prevail among these men, in spite of the restrictions of their rule. **Cap. IV.** There is no brotherly love among them, and the vow of individual poverty is also broken. They make money in various ways and spend it on their pleasures and in enriching **their children, whom they call their nephews.** **Cap. V.** A monk wandering abroad from his cloister is like a fish out of water; nor are those much better who stay within the walls and allow their minds to dwell on worldly things. **Cap. VI.** Some seek honour and dignity under the cover of the monastic profession, even though they be of poor and low birth. **Cap. VII. Patience, Chastity, and the rest who were once brothers of religious orders, are now dead or departed** and their contrary vices have taken their places. **Cap. VIII. So also the regular Canons for the most part neglect their monastic rule and have only a show of sanctity.** **Cap. IX.** Monks who are untrue to their profession are of all men the most unhappy. They have no real enjoyment of this world and they lose also the joys of heaven. **Cap. X.** Let all members of religious orders perform their vows and repent of their past sins, of their pride, luxury, avarice, ambition, gluttony, wrath, envy and strife. **Cap. XI.** Above all let them avoid intercourse with women, who bring death to their souls. Let them labour and study; for idleness is the great incentive to evil. **Cap. XII.** The monk who sets himself to

<sup>1</sup> Berthold of Regensburg, in one of his sermons, gives a very similar, though not quite so bitter, description of the *Abbey of Selfishness*; the abbot is dom Wicked, the prior dom Unvirtuous, the monks dom Proprietary, dom Wrath, etc. etc. (J. L. Hocker, *Hailsbronner Antiquitätenschatz*, Nürnberg, 1731-9, pt II, p. 36).



observe his rule will live hardly and fast often, praying continually and doing penance for sin. He will submit himself humbly to his prior, and he will not grudge to perform duties that are irksome. The prior should be gentle with his younger brethren and not make the yoke too heavy for them. **Cap. XIII.** As regards nuns, they too are under the rule of chastity; but as women are by nature more frail than men, they must not be so severely punished if they break it. They require meat often on Fridays for their stomach's sake, and this is prepared for them by Genius, the priest of Venus. **Cap. XIV.** Where Genius is the confessor of a convent the laws of the flesh prevail. **The priest who visits nuns too often corrupts them,** and the woman very easily yields to temptation. A wife may deceive her husband, but the bride of Christ cannot conceal her unfaithfulness from him; therefore she above all others should be chaste. **Cap. XV.** True virginity is above all praise, and this surpasses every other condition, as a rose surpasses the thorns from which it springs. The best kind of virginity is that which is vowed to God. **Cap. XVI.** Not all whom Christ chose were faithful, and everywhere bad and good are mingled together; **but the fault of the bad is not a reason for condemning the good.** So when I speak of the evil deeds of friars, I condemn the bad only and absolve the good. The number of mendicant friars is too great and **their primitive rule has been forgotten.** They pretend to be poor, but in fact they possess all things, and have power over the pope himself. Both life and death bring in gains to them. **Cap. XVII.** They preach hypocritically against sin in public, but in private they encourage it by flattery and indulgence. They know that their gains depend upon the sins which their penitents commit. Friars do not often visit places where gain is not to be got. They have an outward appearance of poverty and sanctity, without the reality. **I do not desire that they should be altogether suppressed, but that they should be kept under due discipline.** **Cap. XVIII.** Some friars aim at dignity as masters in the schools, and then they are exempted from their rule and obtain entry into great houses. The influence of the friar is everywhere felt, and **often he supplies the place of the absent husband and is the father of his children.** Bees, when they wound, lose their stings and are afterwards helpless: would it were so with the adulterous friar! **Cap. XIX.** The order of friars is not necessary to the Church. Friars appropriate spiritual rights which belong to others; and though this may be by dispensation of the pope, yet we know that the pope does not grant such dispensations of his own motion, and he may be deceived. They ask for the cure of souls, but in fact they are demanding worldly wealth: not so did Francis make petition, but he left all and endured poverty. **Cap. XX.** This multitude of friars is not necessary for the good of society. David says of them that they neither take part in the labours of men nor endure the rule of the law: they toil not neither do they spin, and yet the world feeds them. It is vain for them to plead the merits of Francis, when they do not follow his example. All honour to those who do as

he did. **Cap. XXI.** They draw into their order not grown men but mere boys. Francis was not a boy when he assumed his work; but in these days mere children are enrolled, caught like birds in a snare: and as they are deceived themselves, so afterwards they deceive others. **Cap. XXII.** The friar who transgresses the rule of his order is an apostate and a follower of the apostate fiend. He finds entrance everywhere, and everywhere he lays snares, encourages hatred and fosters impurity. Under a veil of virtuous simplicity he conceals a treacherous heart. **These are ministers of the Synagogue rather than of the Church**, children of Hagar, not of Sara. **Cap. XXIII.** They are dispersed over the world like the Jews, and everywhere they find ease and abundance. Their churches and their houses are built in the most costly style and adorned with the richest ornaments. No king has chambers more magnificent than theirs, and their buildings are a mark of their worldly pride. Unless their souls are fair within, this outward pomp of religion is of no avail. **Cap. XXIV.** Friars differ from one another in the garb of their order, but **all equally neglect their rule.** Only the order founded by brother Burnel still maintains its former state. Two rules of this order I will set forth, which are almost everywhere received. The first is that **what the flesh desires, that you may have; and the second that whatever the flesh shrinks from, that you should avoid.** So the new order of Burnel is thought better than those of Benedict or Bernard. Thus, if bad times come, I shall hold that the error of the Clergy is the cause. The body is nothing without the spirit; we have darkness instead of light, death instead of life, and the flock is scattered abroad without a shepherd."

Again, in a brief poem on all classes of society, Gower stresses monastic decay (*Political Poems and Songs*, R.S. vol. 1, p. 357).

In 1408, Gregory XII wrote to a Frisian abbot: it has been reported to him that the twenty-two Benedictine nunneries in that province have gradually coalesced with men's houses, so that,

"almost all Religion and observance of the said Order, and fear of God, have departed, while lust and fleshly corruption have multiplied in each case between the men and the nuns, with many other evils, excesses, and vices, which it is shameful to speak of. Moreover, very many of these nuns fornicate with their prelates, with monks and with lay-brethren, and **many give birth to children in the nunneries.** Moreover, they sometimes cause and procure their sons thus conceived to be taken as monks, and their daughters as nuns of the said monasteries; and, wretched to relate! some of these nuns forget motherly pity, and, heaping evil upon evil, **destroy some of their unborn fruit, or slay the children after birth.** Moreover, almost all such nuns play the part of handmaids or wives to all the monks and lay-brethren, making their beds, washing their heads or their clothes, cooking delicate viands for them, and very frequently **con-sorting with the monks and lay-brethren, by day and night, in gluttony and drunkenness**" (Dietrich v. Nieheim, *Nemus*

*unionis*, tract VI, c. 34, quoted in Gieseler's *Eccl. Hist.* tr. Hull, vol. iv, p. 141).

The famous petition of the University of Oxford to Henry V, in 1414, contained 46 articles of reform, some of which, as the University hoped, might be taken up by the Ecumenical Council of Constance (e.g. art. 33). Its tone was strongly anti-Wycliffite; the 43rd article pressed for the more efficient punishment of heretics, and the 44th protested against translations of recent theological books into English. Yet it is most plain-spoken as to the crying necessity for reform of the clergy:

**"the carnal and unchaste life of the priests scandalizes nowadays the whole Church, and their public fornications are entirely unpunished, except perchance by a small and secret fine"** (art. 38).

As to the Regulars, the University complains of their appropriations of churches, which result in starvation of the parish clergy and subtraction of alms from the parishioners, and then proceeds (artt. 22-3):

**"Seeing that Religious, obtaining the privilege of exemptions (which we cannot find any of Christ's glorious household to have done in the Scriptures), frequently sin all the more boldly, the farther they have withdrawn their necks from the yoke of the bishop's correction; therefore it would seem most expedient that such exemptions should always be revoked with prudent discretion, because detestable quarrels arise among exempt Religious, whereby they are horribly scandalized and diminished, and the possessions and lands bestowed upon them for God's service are consumed in litigation, as is very evident in the Cistercian and Cluniac Orders throughout England. And because exempt Religious, at the Devil's instigation, are frequently defiled with carnal vices, nor are they punished by their superiors, but their sins remain unpunished, it would seem expedient to decree that the ordinary of the place [i.e. in most cases the bishop] should have full power to punish and reform all Religious, and especially for the crime of fornication committed outside their cloister, etc." [sic]<sup>1</sup>.**

Cardinal Zabarella pleaded to the Council of Constance:

**"Let it be provided that boys and girls be not bound to Religion, unless they be of full age of puberty, by reason of the too frequent lapses which occur in cases of this kind"** (von der Hardt, *Mag. Const. Conc.* vol. i, col. 525; cf. col. 629).

Theobald was one of the divinity professors chosen to speak before the Council of Constance in 1417. His theme was, the urgent necessity of radical reform, and the peril of postponement. It will be noted that he does not always distinguish between Regulars and Seculars, but applies his accusations to both alike.

**"It is better that there should be [in the Church] a few who do well, rather than many that do evil. For, alas! these latter have grown strong to excess, and multiplied beyond number, in these days of ours.**

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. III, p. 363.

Now, this is specially true of clerics and Religious of both sexes [long quotation from St Bernard; many clerics love pleasure and hate work, therefore 'these who laboured not with men shall labour with the devils in hell']. Although this authority shows in general terms **the pride, lechery and covetousness of clerics and Religious**, yet I must speak briefly on each of these points. [A long description of clerical pride.] In the same way is the pride of Religious, male and female, made manifest. For nowadays, as they show in effect, **they enter the monasteries not from devotion**, in order to serve God better, but that they may the more devote themselves to liberty, idleness, vanity and pleasure... But what shall I say of their lechery? I assert, and that with grief, that it is as Jeremiah saith (iii, 3), 'They have a harlot's forehead, they will not blush.' For they neither fear God nor regard man, nor care for their own honour and salvation. Contrary to the sacred canons, they shrink not from entering not only taverns but even brothels, **seducing maidens, married women and nuns**, keeping concubines publicly in their houses, and begetting children upon them, and bringing other women in, and forthwith they go and celebrate Mass. But the bishops, since they are infected with the same vice, do not presume to rebuke these faults; nay, **they take a yearly contribution from them, and allow them all to wallow in their wretchedness**, thus condemning themselves, and these, and their subjects. Again, whereas the nunneries, in canon law, should be closed to all men, except in certain cases, under pain of excommunication, yet they are frequented for the sake of all vanities, not without very great scandal, as if they were public places, even more than the theatres, and even by great folk. And if perchance some folk of high rank dare not to enter by reason of worldly shame, yet they send to the nuns their own little gifts and dishes of food and letters, and, to men's very great scandal, invite them to their houses. **What follows upon these things is shameful to tell, but far more shameful to do.** But—and this is most lamentable of all—all these things, and worse than it is decent to say, are frequently practised at the papal court, which ought to be an exemplar of all Christian religion, and are now abominably practised here, in this holy place [of Constance] which is dedicated to reform. Whereat **layfolk are so scandalized that they are almost losing their faith**, and the doings of this sacred Council command no respect. And (to say nothing of the rest), it has become a proverb that prelates maintain as many harlots as servants<sup>1</sup>. Do ye believe that your shame can remain hidden? Nay! for the harlots themselves, wheresoever they go, boast of the rank of their lovers, and the great gifts they have received. [Any efficient reform must begin from the top.] Again, the greater crimes, for example, simony and ambition and lechery, and other open evils must

<sup>1</sup> An orthodox contemporary calculates that there were 520 courtesans in attendance on the deputies to the Council of Constance, which lasted 3½ years. A less friendly contemporary raises the total to 718 (Lea, *Sac. Cel.* 1907, vol. II, p. 4 note).

be corrected. But, alas! our prelates strain at a gnat and swallow a camel; for they permit the greater faults and discuss the smaller"<sup>1</sup>.

The abbot of St-Maxence in Poitou writes to the pope in 1419 that the Hundred Years' War has interrupted the celebration of Benedictine General Chapters in France,

"by reason whereof **almost the whole monastic Order in the said parts is now almost in ruins**—*pene lapsus est*—and regular observances and Religious discipline are dying out. [Within his own experience, monks have attacked monks of other convents] and left them half-dead; and they intimidate other good folk, or threaten them, or draw them after themselves to a dissolute life, scouring the country in arms, apostatizing and committing many other crimes"<sup>2</sup>.

From the two Benedictine chroniclers, Thomas Walsingham and the author of *The Continuation of the History of Croyland*, we get some very significant evidence under the year 1421 (Walsingham, R.S. vol. II, p. 337; Fell and Fulman, *Scriptores*, 1684, p. 513). The Carthusian prior of Mount-grace reported to Henry V that

"the [Benedictine] abbots, with their companions, had turned far aside; that **monastic Religion had fallen from its primitive institutions and observances**, and that of necessity it could be reformed by the King's Majesty, and by none other." [The king addressed an assembly of 60 abbots and 300 monks] "concerning the primitive Religion of monks, and the devotion of his predecessors and others in founding and endowing them, and the negligences and indevotion of the moderns."

While both chroniclers are indignant with the informers ("certain false brethren," says Walsingham) yet they cannot venture to assert that the accusations were fundamentally calumnious, and Walsingham in especial shows that the king's interference was needed. His fellow writes that, after certain important reforming statutes had been passed,

"thenceforward the king's outburst of indignation was allayed, and he marvelled much, nay he vehemently congratulated himself, **that he had so numerous a multitude of literates and graduates in his realm**." [I hope to deal more fully with this important episode in my last volume.]

Jean Gerson (1363-1429) was perhaps, on the whole, the greatest churchman of the fifteenth century in the west. Elected chancellor of the University of Paris at an unusually early age, he played a great part not only in academic but in European affairs, especially at the General Councils of Pisa and Constance. At length he retired from public life, and spent his last ten years as teacher of little children in a convent at Lyons. I quote from the edition of his works published at Paris in 1606. He had occasion to write a whole treatise against these Augustinians who not only had private property but defended its possession: he quotes 2 Pet. ii, 21, "For it had been better for

<sup>1</sup> V. d. Hardt, *Mag. Const. Concil.* vol. I, coll. 902 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Denifle, *Désolation*, vol. I, p. 573; cf. pp. 236, 238, 241, 270, 322, 346, 381, 390, 395, 409, 412, 414, 415, 418, 420, 421, 423, 425, 433, 496, 599.

them not to have known the way of justice, than, after they have known it, to turn back." He continues:

"Read this therefore to your own ruin, unless ye prepare yourselves to amend; for ye deserve not to be called Regulars, or to wear the regular habit, or to take the necessities of life from regular endowments, according to the founders' intentions, unless ye observe the Rule in future in so far as ye can, doing penance for what is past." And again: "Thus the founders' intentions are defrauded, the ecclesiastical institutes are contemned, evangelical teaching is set at naught, the [monk's] own salvation is neglected, and **the light of perfect Religion, which once gleamed in the Church, is in these modern days, alas! for the greater part obscured, not to say extinguished**" [vol. I, coll. 652, 658. Again, in his *Compendious Declaration of the Defects of Ecclesiastics* (vol. I, coll. 206-10), Gerson writes]: "What has now become of that decree of the Council of Chalcedon? 'Let monks be intent only upon fasting and prayer, in the monasteries where they have renounced the world; nor let them desert their own cloisters to busy themselves with ecclesiastical or secular business.' And especially, why need monks be called forth, seeing that numberless secular folk are now studying in the litigious faculties, that is, laws and jurisprudence? . . . **How many places of divine worship, as monasteries and churches of the venerable martyrs at Rome and elsewhere, are now deserted and ruined** through the aforesaid causes, and the carelessness of their superiors? . . . Why is it that bishops, abbots and monks of our day are officers rather of the treasury than of Christ, fighting with all their might for the world in the courts of princes and secular judges and parliaments? . . . Open your eyes again, and **see whether nowadays the cloisters of nuns have become as it were brothels of harlots; and whether the consecrated monasteries of canons become as it were marketplaces and inns** . . . See whether it be right to have so great a number and variety of Religious." He begins by telling us that he will here say nothing of the more and the greater defects—*de pluribus et grandioribus*; and he ends with the lament that the defects "remaining long uncorrected, are growing, and are found to go from bad to worse, until at last, **under the iniquitous fiction of 'custom,' they are reputed lawful**." He recurs to this in one of his sermons (vol. II, col. 625): "We ought also to provide among the men and women who have professed Religions of this kind [i.e. in hospitals, which were mainly under the Augustinian Rule at this time], as is wont to be done also in all others, **that they should keep their Three Vows of obedience, poverty and chastity**. For manifest appropriations are found among them, as among seculars, though the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira ought to have warned them away. What, again, is the meaning of all their flittings to and fro among worldly folks' houses? And O! **would that there were no nunneries which had become brothels of harlots, and may God forbid that there be worse still!**" And lastly, in another sermon: "I actually doubt whether

boys and girls do not sometimes learn worse morals through this cause [of incautious association] in their parents' homes and among monks and nuns and in schools, than they would have done **in brothels of pandars or harlots**"<sup>1</sup>. And in another place he thus sums up, after lauding the "state of perfection," *i.e.* the monastic and ecclesiastical profession, as an ideal: "Many married folk are and have been perfect in Christian life, yet they had not this *state of perfection*... Similarly, many (as, alas! we may see only too plainly) are in the *state of perfection*, of prelacy or Religion, yet [in themselves] as imperfect as possible—*omnino imperfectissimi*—dissolute in life and in morals" (vol. III, col. 346 a). Finally, we must not forget his general condemnations, in which he makes no exception for the Religious: "Our age has neither faith nor morals" (vol. II, col. 648 c); "**The Church is eaten up as with an incurable cancer, and the very remedies do but make her sick**" (vol. I, col. 566 a).

Johann Nider, who died in 1438, was prior of the Dominicans at Bâle, Inquisitor, and one of the prominent politicians at the General Council of Bâle. He was specially severe against not only heretics but witches; but the book which here concerns us is his *De Reformatione Religiosorum*, printed at Antwerp in 1611. There is a good life of him by K. Schieler (Mainz, 1885) which shows no more ultramontane bias than is almost inevitable in an orthodox priest of the Roman Church. The cumulative force of Nider's criticisms can be realized only by those who read through the whole 390 pages of this book. In addition to the portions here translated, almost equally important matter will be found on pp. 17, 18, 20-2, 30 ff., 39, 74, 98, 103, 112 ff., 136-7, 143 ff., 146-7, 168-72, 180, 194, 198, 202, 217, 250, 254, 259, 272. He sees quite clearly that it would be revolutionary to attempt a complete and direct reform at once (pp. 224, 231); and in other passages he shows sympathy, and a natural measure of conservatism. But, in his preface, he insists on the folly of silence or disguise:

"If any men be displeased by the following pages, they themselves show that they love not the Orders, since they will not that the corruptions and vices therein be condemned. To such, therefore, I answer in the words of St Gregory the Great: *It is better that scandal should arise than that truth be left unspoken.*" He asks: "Can any Religion, once decayed, be completely reformed at one stroke? . . . It would seem not, especially if it has multiplied in number of monasteries. . . . **Good Religious are very few—*paucissimi*—in comparison with the bad;** and it is easier to go backward than to go forward; and one perverse monk can more easily pervert others than ten good monks can convert a single brother. Therefore, all the good men who have kept their goodness in a whole Order would scarcely be able to reform a half of that Order, even if they would. . . . Therefore the monastic harvest is great, but the labourers are few" (pp. 216 ff.). Yet "monks [reasonably] can and should be compelled [by reformers] to keep things

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, p. 629: "Dubitaverim prorsus, si non deteriores mores trahunt aliquando pueri et puellae hac occasione in parentum domiciliis et religionum et scholarum contuberniis, quam facturi erant in prostibulis lenonum vel meretricum."

which they have vowed, and without which the Three Substantials cannot long stand" (p. 62). "Let [reform] begin mainly by eradication of mortal sins, and by firmly establishing the Three Substantials of the Religious vow, to wit, obedience, chastity and poverty" (p. 259). "Nowadays [among the Friars], as, alas! in the other Orders, the primaevael poverty and true community of goods seems to be kept in very few convents" (p. 113; Nider himself was a Dominican). Their buildings are too magnificent and costly and wasteful (p. 117). This is one root of the evil: "The disproportionate increase of wealth, whereby **in these days we see that monasteries are most grievously decayed in Religion**" (p. 250). This is often treated as private property; whence "even separate members of the community grow proud and wanton" (p. 252). Therefore also, when serious attempts are made to correct them, they apostatize and go out into the world (p. 302). Again, some are obstinate, and quarrel with correction, thus disturbing the whole peace of the convent; "and, what is far more formidable, many run away from the cloister and transfer themselves to other more dissolute monasteries, or become apostates; and **the nuns sometimes prostitute themselves abominably**" (p. 99). And all this has become ingrained. When it is attempted to bring a particular house or Order back to its primitive purity: "Wherefore, (answer such folk), doth this rigour of reform begin with us rather than with others? are not we of the same profession as they? Our reply is that this refusal to reform until others are reformed is to refuse all reform until that Last Doom in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, when (as the Apostle writeth, 1 Cor. xv, 51, *Vulg.*): *We shall all indeed rise again, but we shall not all be changed*" (p. 57). "It is this custom of transgressing the Rule and the statutes which chiefly hindereth the reformation of Religious" (p. 157). Half-measures have been tried in vain; in any particular monastery "if we begin but slowly, and the Rule and by-laws be not strictly kept by the mass at the beginning of a reform, then, as we have learned by experience, it is scarcely ever possible afterwards to effect a complete reform" (p. 224). "This is well-known to those who have never been able, even in monasteries which had in other respects been reformed, to enforce that abstinence from flesh-meats upon which the Rule insists, or other similar things, when they had not been introduced at the outset of the reform" (p. 225). And, in all this insistence, he is sure of his own just cause: "Perchance some adversary of reform will rebuke me, and say that I am thus a detractor of Religion. To whom I answer: I attack not Religion, but the irreligious, and I stigmatizæ their decayed state as detestable. If any clerics or Religious are shocked to hear themselves evil spoken of, then let them shun those deeds which expose them everywhere to notoriety, so that the very stones (that is, the layfolk) cry aloud, even though I should hold my peace" (p. 97).

Nider's *Formicarius* (Douai, 1602) gives almost equally strong evidence. The bitterest enemies of reform are the clergy themselves (pp. 32, 108). Moreover, there is another great difficulty in the wickedness of the prelates



(*prelatorum malitia*, p. 54; cf. p. 55, where the context shows clearly that Nider uses the word in its ordinary Bible sense, as in Gen. vi, 5; 1, 17, etc., and not merely, as Schieler and Pastor wrongly soften it down, "evil disposition"). Consequently, there is no hope of a *general* reformation of the Church either now or in the immediate future. "However, I have no doubt that a partial reformation of the Church in many of its conditions and orders is possible." This last sentence is quoted by Pastor as if the words were Nider's own, whereas they are only Schieler's abridgement. What Nider actually says is,

"However, as to partial reformation in the Church polity, possible in many conditions and Religious Orders, I do not doubt that we see them being introduced daily in some—*quibusdam*—monasteries and convents; but, with how much difficulty, God Almighty knoweth! For if, during six years of the sitting of the Ecumenical Council of Bâle, not even one monastery of the weaker sex could be reformed, even though the civil magistrates lent their aid, by reason of the ill life of certain of the inmates, and the fierceness of their supporters<sup>1</sup>, what, pray, can we hope from the communities of noble or literate men, who can defend the ruin and deformities in their spiritual houses not only with weapons of steel but also, what is worse, with the verbal weapons of the tongue?"—*i.e.* by litigation at Rome or in other courts.

All that is here printed in clarendon type, Pastor omits, and is thus able to represent Nider as deprecating complete reform rather because he fears the bungling restorations of amateur architects; whereas it is plain that his main feeling is that of oppression by a sense of rottenness throughout almost the whole building. Nider goes on (p. 56) to lament the successful resistance which sinners had opposed even to the most pious and energetic prelates of his own day, a subject to which he recurs later (p. 107). Otto, bishop of Trèves (1418–30) "found that his canons and priests were fallen from the degree of their institution, and the monasteries everywhere deformed." He attempted to reform them, but failed almost completely, and died broken-hearted, prophesying evil to come. In fact, civil war followed between two rival claimants to the bishopric; and now (says Nider) "the churches and monasteries are so desolate that many men are compelled to go elsewhere; some for lack of worldly necessities, and others by reason of their compulsory abstinence from the Sacraments."

The Council of Bâle, in 1439, undertook to grapple afresh with the great problem. The preamble to its reforming decrees runs thus:

"We see that **Regular discipline and the holiness of Religion are almost altogether ruined, and have miserably fallen, to the grievous scandal of the whole Order of Black Monks, and the disgrace, opprobrium and contempt of all who profess that Order; nay, also, what is still more lamentable, to the fatal loss of salvation for souls. For, alas! Religion hath lost all her glory, and she who of old could boast in the Lord and say, 'I am black' in the vileness of my raiment 'but comely' in the holiness of my manners and conversation, now, alas! the ancient holy boorishness of monachism is**

<sup>1</sup> "Propter quarundam inhabitantium vitam malivolam, et eisdem astantem [*astantium?*] saevitiam."

changed to wantonness and petulance; so that, whether we look at the outward show or at the inward thing, **no image of her earlier sanctity** is seen now to survive. Wherefore we...desiring above all things and set with all our heart upon remedying such and so enormous scandals, and fearing lest (which God forbid!) the Order fall presently into even more grievous ruin, have met together for the reform of the same."

Henry VI was driven to write in 1441 to the General of the Carmelite friars in England:

"We see in this our realm of England how certain novelties are growing up in your holy Religion, whereby criminals are defended in their crimes as under a shield; and filthy men, that they may wallow the more in their filth, are protected under the shadow of your wings; **the discipline of the Order is despised** and trodden underfoot; **Religion is defiled**, and through the boldness of impurity all men are granted, not without **very great scandal and horror**, almost a free licence for transgression"<sup>1</sup>.

Though the treatise *On the Corrupt State of the Church* is not actually from the pen of Nicolas de Clémanges, archdeacon of Bayeux (1360-[1426]), it was very early and frequently ascribed to him, and it is a contemporary production. The treatise is violent in language; but the main points are only such as were emphasized at the same time by churchmen who, like Clémanges, played a conspicuous part at the Council of Constance or of Bâle. I translate from Brown's *Fasciculus*, vol. II, pp. 559, 564-6.

"In monasteries and other places whose revenues the cardinals enjoy, facts are eloquent as to how God is served and the tottering buildings are kept up. **All are falling into decay and ruin**, so that it is often necessary to transfer their administration to layfolk until the necessary repairs, which could be ensured in no other way, are completed. How the monks live there, what discipline or Rule is kept, they care not, so long as their steward's skill fills their purse heavy with the revenues....**Of monks and monasteries I could speak at large, were I not long weary of dwelling on the enumeration of so many and so great abominations**....What can we say in commendation of these men who, the more perfect they should be, according to the vows of their Religion, among the other sons of the Church, the more abstracted they should be from the care of those worldly things which they have renounced, the more rapt in heavenly contemplation, the more continent and obedient, the less wandering, the most infrequent in leaving their claustral precincts for public places, the more strange we may now find them to all these things; to wit, the more tenacious and avaricious, the more backsliding and entangled in worldliness; nay, the more **lecherous, indisciplined, dissolute**, restless, the more given to wander in public and dishonest places, if only the reins are relaxed?...[As to the Mendicants], are they not **ravenging wolves, lurking in sheep's clothing**, who, like

<sup>1</sup> Bekynton, *Correspondence*, R.S. vol. I, p. 137.

the priests of Baal, devour the offerings in their dens, greedily filling themselves with wine and delicate meats; with wives that are not their own, though the children be often theirs, and **defiling all with the lusts wherein they burn?** . . . Only the nuns are now left. . . . **Shame forbids my saying more** of them, though there be no lack of things to say, lest I be drawn into shameful and prolix speech concerning not a crowd of virgins devoted to God, but rather of brothels, of harlots' wiles and effrontery, of adulteries and works of unchastity. For what, pray, are the nunneries of today, but **execrable brothels of Venus** instead of sanctuaries for God, and dens in which wanton and shameless youths satisfy their lusts? so that, nowadays, to veil a girl is to expose her publicly to prostitution."

St Bernardino (1380-1444), though not the formal founder of the Observant Franciscans, was the man who contributed most to the success of that reform, as St Bernard had done among the Cistercians. He was one of the greatest mission-preachers of all times; he refused the bishoprics of Siena, Ferrara and Urbino. There is an excellent biography of him by Mr A. G. Ferrers Howell, which has never attracted the notice it deserves. In one of his sermons, after very plain speech concerning nuns' morals, he adds:

"Ah! I know not whether thou hast understood my speech in parables the other day, when I said that **parents should go and keep watch over their daughters in the nunneries**, and that one part should go thither by day and another by night, in order that the nuns be well guarded. Some other time I will tell thee what I mean; now, to my main subject." [And in another sermon]: "Ladies, be not too familiar with men; care not to get the name of *friaresses* or *priestesses*; God and His saints help a woman if she be familiar with them; for sore she needeth their help. . . . O widow, wouldst thou do well? then have no converse either with good or with evil men; O, ye good friars, O, ye holy priests, I say nay, with no man. Stay at home; believe me, that is best—O! may I not converse with the good and holy, that they may teach me?—Yes, but with a wall betwixt you. . . . Tarry not too long in the church; remove every occasion; give every good example of thyself and of thy life. . . . If a woman be seen talking with a friar, there are seven [tattling women] who will whisper about them. And even though she only haunt the church, with the friar there in a corner, and no speech between them, even so the [tattlers] will whisper; and, if they can catch only a look between them, there is no need of more." And, (he proceeds), there is reality at the back of this; "I will tell you a most apt example, and note it well" [of a penitent and a holy man who passed thus from religious talk to sin in thought and sin in act<sup>1</sup>. In one of his Latin sermons, he stigmatizes it as a common sin to give the attractive daughters in marriage, while the rest they dedicate] "**as the scum or vomit of the world, I would I might say to God**

<sup>1</sup> *Prediche Volgari*, vol. II, pp. 138-9. Compare Thomas Cantimpratanus, *De Apibus*, pp. 287-9.

**and not to the Devil**" [in some nunnery<sup>1</sup>. And in another place], **"Very many folk, regarding the wicked lives—*sceleratam vitam*—of Religious and clergy, are thus led to waver—nay, oftentimes to fail—in faith, believing in nothing higher than their own roofs, not thinking those things to be true which have been written concerning our faith, but supposing them to have been written by the deceitful invention of man and not by God's inspiration.... From hence it followeth that they believe not in the power of the keys, despise the Sacraments of the Church, hold that the soul hath no immortality, neither shun vices nor respect virtues, neither fear hell nor desire heaven, but cling with all their hearts to transitory things and resolve that this world shall be their paradise"**<sup>2</sup>.

St Antonino (1389-1459) became vicar-general of the Dominicans in Tuscany and Naples (1436) and archbishop of Florence (1446); he showed great self-sacrifice during the plague of 1448 and the earthquake of 1453. He was a distinguished scholastic philosopher, and did most, after St Thomas Aquinas, to work out the theory of usury so as to reconcile Church teaching with economic necessities. He discusses the monastic state in his *Chronicle* (pt II, tit. xvi, c. 23; vol. II, 1636, p. 561). He has been describing at length the different Reformed Orders (Cluniacs, Vallombrosans, Cistercians, Premonstratensians, Templars, Grandimontans, Carthusians, Humiliati); after which he continues:

**"But all the Orders aforesaid are in these days so relaxed, and are grown so cold, that we may truly say of them in the words of Jeremiah: 'How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!' Or, again, in St Bernard's words against the Cluniacs. [St Antonino here quotes at great length from chapters VIII and IX of St Bernard's *Apology to Guillaume de St-Thierry*, in which the saint pours bitter scorn on the relaxed monks of Cluny and some other great monasteries. He then proceeds]: So all the aforesaid Orders, both of Monks and of Canons Regular, began with great fervour and holiness of life; but, neglecting the lesser points of the traditions of their fathers, they have gradually degenerated in process of time, and have been brought to nought even in the matter of the fundamentals, the three Substantial Vows<sup>3</sup>—except only the Carthu-**

<sup>1</sup> *Opp.* vol. I, p. 216; for full quotation see the chapter on nunneries in my next volume. I do not here notice the long poem printed as St Bernardino's in vol. III, pp. 445 ff., because it is too rhetorical for direct evidence. The World argues against Religion; and, although the pope, as umpire, decides for Religion, yet the impartial reader will probably feel that this advocate has shirked all the plainest accusations brought by the World. Moreover, the poem cannot possibly be by St Bernardino; not only metre and style, but contents, speak for at least 150 years before his time: e.g. the friars are described as new Orders whose future is still uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> *Opp.* (1745), vol. I, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> "Et exinanitae sunt usque ad fundamenta in eis, vota scilicet substantialia." The *Tria Substantialia* of monasticism were: (1) Poverty, (2) Obedience, and (3) Chastity, from which not even the pope can dispense a monk.

sians, who still remain in their former vigour<sup>1</sup>. **But, by God's mercy, within the last seventy years they have flourished again to some extent<sup>2</sup>, since the inmates of a few monasteries have reformed themselves to live according to their Rule.** [He goes on to specify two reformed congregations in North Italy, comprising about a score of monasteries.] The Cistercians, it is true, were a pillar of the Church in St Bernard's day; and for a hundred years after they were distinguished for learning and holiness; but they also turned aside from the steps of their fathers and became unprofitable; but, about twelve years ago, some of the monks of their abbey in Florence, under Eugenius IV, went over to an Order of Cistercians of Strict Observance, . . . and the little flock of this new monastery is now grown to no small company. The Black Monks, among whom the Cluniacs are reckoned, waxed fat and well-fed, and spread over the whole world in innumerable abbeys, and wandered abroad at their will; and, although they were somewhat curbed-in by that Decretal of Pope Clement, *Quia in nigro*, yet **they remained black not only in their outward habit but in their inmost mind.** But God, who maketh old things new, and who kindleth black coal to a shining fire, hath inspired **certain monks** of noble birth according to the world, and nobler still in mind, to **fulfil the Rule of their father Benedict in all its fulness**, and to add thereunto certain supplementary constitutions. This began about the year 1400, in the abbey of Sta Justina at Padua; [to this congregation, in a short time, many other great monasteries have joined themselves]. The [Italian] White Monks of the Benedictine Rule, that is the Camaldulensians, **have degenerated** from their father St Romuald and are gone backwards, **with the exception of very few monasteries and desert hermitages**; [a reform was begun in 1370 and now comprises a good many houses]. Moreover, the [Italian] Grey Monks (as those of Vallombrosa are called) have gone astray from the steps of their father St John Gualbert, who founded them also under the Rule of St Benedict, so that there was scarce one among them who did good. Under this habit and rule were some called Sylvestrini, after Sylvester their founder, who began his reform at Monte Fano near Fabriano in the Mark of Ancona. These multiplied and built several monasteries in divers cities. In Florence their convent was that of San Marco, but it was taken from them by reason of their dissolute life by Pope Eugenius IV, who gave it to the Friars Preachers: moreover, **this [reformed] Order [of Sylvestrines] is now come almost utterly to nought** for lack of brethren. [He finally specifies another smaller reformed congregation in Italy, and concludes]: While the men of these Orders were deformed, the women also, the nuns, went side by side with them in the path of

<sup>1</sup> It is still the Carthusian boast "nunquam reformati, quia nunquam deformati." Cleaving to the original monastic ideal of solitude, and never having become so numerous or so rich as most of the other Orders, they have resisted the process of decay far better than the rest.

<sup>2</sup> The text has "pullulantes refluuerunt"; it seems probable from the context that St Antonino wrote "paullulum refluuerunt."

relaxation. For both the Cistercian nuns, and the Camaldulensians, and the Black Ladies [of St Benedict] in their divers convents, and the Vallombrosans and the Austin Canonesses walked by the broad and easy way. Yet **a few—*aliqua*—nunneries have been renewed in the strict and narrow way** of regular life, and other such have been lately built, as that convent which is called San Donato in Polvere, and the newly-built house of Sta Monica under the Augustinian Rule. But above all others the convent of l'Annunciata, called in the vulgar tongue *The Enclosed Ladies*, lately built under the Rule and black habit of St Benedict, is **fragrant with a marvellous odour of sanctity**. For they live in the utmost poverty; more than a hundred nuns without possessions or rents, living by the labours of their hands, and sharing with each other in great quiet and mutual charity the alms not begged abroad but sent into their convent. Moreover, beyond the Canonical Hours which they duly perform, some of the convent remain ever in the sanctuary, by day and by night, singing psalms in alternate verses without intermission.... Of the Mendicant Orders... and their saints and doctors, *their relaxation and renovation*, I write fully in another place below." But when, in a later passage, he comes to this task, he does not in fact fulfil the promise of the words I have here italicized.

Meffret or Meffreth, a priest of the diocese of Meissen, wrote his volume of sermons in 1443. They were printed first in 1487 and again in the year following; my quotations are from the Munich edition of 1612, *pars aestivalis*, pp. 23-4.

"At the first institution of the Orders, Religious were as the stars of heaven, adorning Holy Church and fighting by their salutary preachings against the devil [as the stars in their course fought against Siserā]; for instance, Saints Francis and Dominic, whose Orders the General Council approved for the evident profit that came therefrom to the whole Church, even though it forbade the formation of fresh Orders thenceforth.... But from this heaven of holy life **many are now fallen—I say not all**—to the earth of earthly desires, as one should say: 'The stars shall fall from heaven'; that is, monks shall go abroad from their cloister, running about the world for the sake of gathering earthly riches.... And, though Nicholas de Lyra saith that every Religious Order was founded in the abnegation of private property, yet many care not for this, but at the devil's instigation they heap together and hoard money, wherefore it is to be feared that, with Ananias and Sapphira who kept part of the land they had sold and laid part at the Apostles' feet, they will not escape damnation.... Secondly, by *heaven* we must understand *Holy Scripture*, as saith the Psalmist: 'Who stretchest out the heaven like a parchment'<sup>1</sup>; which

<sup>1</sup> Meffret here follows the usual medieval licence of allegorical interpretation. The Vulgate runs (Ps. ciii, 3), "*extendens coelum sicut pellem*," and *pellis* might mean a skin of parchment; therefore *heaven* may be interpreted as equivalent to *book*, and therefore as *Bible*. The Douai version has "like a pavilion."

Holy Scripture is stretched out to all preachers. **From this heaven of Scripture many Religious are fallen; for now they care not for study; wherefore we must fear that they sweat in lechery—***quod insudent luxurie vitio*—which yet is a far more grievous fault in them, seeing that the congregation of Religious is the nobler part of the Spouse—*i.e.* the Church of God.... The vow of chastity is so bound up with the monastic Rule, that the Pope himself cannot grant a licence [to the contrary] as we find in canon law (*Decret. Greg.* l. iii, tit. xxv, c. 6). Wherefore the Religious, to avoid that vice, should read or study, as St Jerome warneth Rusticus the monk... 'Love the knowledge of the Scriptures, and thou shalt not love fleshly vices.'... The priests of old were adorned with the knowledge of truth; for the principal intention of the clergy should be to learn truth and teach truth... But of the present-day clergy—*de modernis clericis*—St John foretold (Apoc. vi, 14), 'The heaven departed as a book folded up'; and Isaiah (xxxiv, 4), 'The heavens shall be folded together as a book.' By *heaven* we must understand *priests*, whose conversation should be in heaven (Phil. iii, 20). But such an order of priests [as we now have] hath now departed as a book folded up, wherein no learning or teaching can be seen or had. Thus, from a great part of the clergy, no example can be seen nor any word of teaching heard, as St Gregory saith in his Homilies: 'Lo, the world is full of priests, but rare indeed is the labourer in God's harvest; for we do indeed undertake the priestly office, yet we fulfil it not.' For a priest's office is first to study in books and then to teach the people; but now we do by no means—*minime*—fulfil that duty. For, whereas the priests of old studied in God's law, now our priests study the game of dice, where they do not teach the people but scandalize them all the more."

The abbot Antonius Bargensis, who in 1450-1 wrote his Chronicle of the Olivetans, thus explains the rapid growth of the Order to the number of 300 monks within a few years of its first institution in [1320].

"At that time, almost all regular [monastic] observance was brought to nought in France, Italy, and all through the Roman world; to wit, Cistercians, Camaldulensians, Vallombrosans, and also Friars Minor and Friars Preachers. For St Bernardino [of Siena], who was joined to me by the bond of great friendship and familiarity, himself began that observance of the Friars Minor which is now flourishing<sup>1</sup>. I have heard for certain from ancient and experienced fathers, that **it is rare for a Religious Order to remain in good observance beyond a century**; for it is very hard to remain long on the heights. Lo! let us take an example from the manual arts; do we not see how every art is begun with great fervour? but certainly it is gradually brought to nought by neglect. For, under the burden, we grow weary, unless the singular grace of our Saviour come to our help by renewing us from

<sup>1</sup> This is technically incorrect, the legal founder of the Observantines was Paolo de' Trinci; but St Bernardino did as much for the success of this movement as St Bernard had done for Cistercian success.

day to day; wherefore Aristotle affirmeth outright that virtue consists in things difficult. Therefore our Religion, newly begun, came forth-with to a great increase of brethren; not only because God poured his spirits into men's hearts, but also because no other Rule of Religion was truly observed—in *observantia consistebat*—save only the Carthusian" (*Chron. M.-O.* p. 20).

For Thomas Gascoigne see the introduction to his *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, ed. J. E. T. Rogers. He was one of the most distinguished chancellors of Oxford in the Middle Ages, and a strong anti-Wycliffite; he wrote about 1450. My quotations will be found in the book here referred to, pp. 109, 111, 113, 115, 143, 147, 149. Gascoigne is mainly concerned with the harm done to parish life through appropriations of benefices by monasteries.

"Perchance these persons to whom the benefices are appropriated pray for the parishioners whose goods they take...but these parishioners for whom the appropriators pray receive from them no temporal help, neither hospitality nor advice nor preaching nor many other needful benefits....Item, by the omission of such good things it cometh oftentimes to pass that **many more persons in these parishes go to hell than those who are fed in the monasteries through such appropriations.** Frequently, by such appropriations, spiritual goods are not increased in the monasteries, but rather superfluous or unnecessary ornaments, or **gluttonous dishes, and vicious irregularities—insolentiae**; and, if we abolished appropriations, the cause of such evils in many places would be abolished....From such men will the Lord take away the wealth which they misuse, and will give them penury.... Oh! how many founders of churches, monasteries and colleges are now crying before God to those whom they have founded: 'Ye are thieves; for ye have not done these due good works, nor performed the intention of our foundation...therefore saith the Lord: **'Depart from Me, ye accursed!'**" [The result of appropriations is] "the multiplication of many servants and idle folk and poms and dishes, and gifts to magnates and rich worldly folk." [Monks now defend their expensive life by pleading] "because we possess baronial estates, therefore, like barons, we have a right to gilded bridles and costly horse-trappings and saddles"; [but it was not for this that the lands were bequeathed]. "God hath said (Malachi ii, 2), *I will curse your blessings*...for by your sordid conversation ye defile the holy thing, religion, and those who do wickedly are blessed." In the days when monasteries were founded, monks laboured with their hands; in these days the pope has found it necessary to **disendow** some of them, and it would be well if he would go farther: "O how meritorious it would be in him if he would cause **the superfluous revenues of many monasteries and mitred abbots** to be united to devout rectors of souls, and would constrain these, under heavy penalties, to due and needful residence in their parishes!"

Jakob v. Jüterbogk was born about 1385, joined the Cistercians in his twentieth year, and became abbot of Paradise in Poland. After forty years in this Order, he obtained leave from the papal legates to join the Carthusians,



and died prior of their monastery at Erfurt in 1465. The sermon from which I take these extracts was printed by C. W. F. Walch in his *Monimenta Medii Aevi* (Göttingen, 1757, vol. 1, pp. 159 ff.; cf. p. lxvii). It is entitled: "Of the Negligence of Prelates." Jakob takes for his text Jeremiah ix, 1: *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!* The Church, he says, has three mortal wounds: contempt of God's commandments, the deadening of claustral perfection, and

"the negligence of prelates, arising from unmindfulness that they must render an account, and frantic love of money... The negligence of prelates in correcting the transgressions of their subjects is the cause of all the vices in the world... For, since transgressions against God's law and man's law remain unpunished, all kinds of evil are perpetrated without fear... Wherefore the negligence of prelates is compared to a contagious plague... Through this neglect of correction alone, almost innumerable souls, predestined to eternal life, will be damned for ever... For guilt spreads terribly by example, while the sinner is honoured through reverence for his Order. Alas, how many wry-mouthed basilisks, **how many deadly monsters, ravening wolves in sheep's clothing, lurk nowadays within the caverns of the cloisters of orthodox fathers**, rashly profaning the trinity of claustral perfection<sup>1</sup>, and, as men commonly report, shrinking from no wickedness! That which a hardened devil shrinks from doing, a reprobate and contumacious monk does without fear. Hence **simple and unlettered folk are much scandalized, and perpetrate sins the more freely**; having sinned, they are the more constant in pleading their satirical privileges: 'Wherefore dost thou rebuke me, while such and such monks do this, even though they are bound by a more perfect law?' And thus, by implication, they rebuke **the negligence of their superiors**, who foster such evils among Religious." Hence arise most of the evils of this evil age; for "we read also in St Bridget's revelations that God, merciful by nature, is provoked to vengeance against the world by two evils in especial; to wit, irreverence for the Sacraments, and the false life of Religious." [The root of all, thinks Jakob, is in the persistence with which monks cling to private property, in defiance of their Rule and of canon law.] "But some may ask: 'Wherefore, after all<sup>2</sup>, do many monks pant so eagerly after this damnable private property that neither prayers can bend them nor threats drive them away from it?' The answer is, that the cause is double; to wit, outward, in the negligence of prelates who tolerate property among their subjects, and the other inward, in the inordinate love of a delicate life, which requires the use of money, to obtain which **many enter into Religion; not for God's sake but for their own bodily comfort**, despairing of being provided with earthly goods so long as they remain in the world. Thus, these monks seeking their own, and not seeking that which is God's, their life

<sup>1</sup> I.e. the *tria substantialia* of obedience, poverty and chastity.

<sup>2</sup> Reading, with Walch, *tamen multi*; but *tam multi* seems more probable.

and their evil deeds make manifest their corrupt intention of private property"<sup>1</sup>.

The rest of Jakob's sermon is mainly devoted to a refutation of the flimsy pretexts by which some of his contemporaries attempted to excuse this general relaxation. The monk who clings to a halfpenny (he says), is not worth a halfpenny. He deals also with their excuses who plead,

"I, seeing that the monks of my Order live delicately and splendidly, thought within myself that I might well bear that sort of life; therefore I had that delicate life in my mind when I made my profession; **I did not profess the strict Rule of Benedict or of Francis.**"

And he ends on the note of *Piers Plowman*: these endowments were given originally for really pious uses; now that they are so shamefully abused, the descendants of the donors,

"seeing their present dissolute life, are already more inclined to take away than to give." "When the Church loses virtue, then she loses wealth. For we see clearly that monasteries which of old, in their reformed state, were most opulent, are now come to such poverty that, even while the monks live slenderly and poorly, the walls and roofs cannot be kept from ruin. And where, in the olden days of reform, before these proprietaries came into power, **seventy brethren** or more were comfortably fed, now **eight or ten** can scarce be maintained without penury. Herein we see the Lord's hand manifestly armed in vengeance against the proprietaries. For, when the reason for the donation of worldly wealth fails—that is, the great devotion and holy life of the ancient fathers, by reason whereof the wealth was given—then the effect in that worldly wealth ought to fail and cease; wherefore it is not undeservedly that this is now taken away from them. . . . Therefore **the disobedient monk ought to be constrained to obedience to his Rule by the secular arm, by which he ought to be corrected.**"

Jakob recurs to the same subject in a treatise which is preserved in the cathedral library at Trèves (MS. no. 34).

The times are out of joint; is not this **that "incurable sickness"** which Chrysostom foretold for the last stage of this world's existence? (fol. 61 b). "Who doth not see how ecclesiastical censures have lost their power over the laity, so that scarce any man can be found who cares for the sentences of excommunication or interdict<sup>1</sup>, and **the clerical dignity and the estate of Religion are held of no account** among secular folk?" (fol. 62 a). "Never were times so perilous as they now are; never did men so stray from God without fearing His punishment." It was temporal punishment that came upon Sodom of old; hell is reserved for "the sodomites of our time" (fol. 65 b). "If no reformation of the Church come about, **will Antichrist come to consummate the evil?**" (fol. 66 a). [Relaxations have crept into monastic life under false pleas]: "Nowadays, under this colour of necessity or

<sup>1</sup> The original is here not quite grammatical, but the sense is plain.

utility, such monsters have been fabricated among Religious that **almost the whole Church is confounded**; especially among the nuns, of whom there are few who are not provided with yearly revenues by their parents or friends; so that, while some go hungry, others abound in delights and are drunken" (fol. 78 a).

The following letter was written in 1450 by the abbot of the Schottenkloster at Vienna to a friend at the lately-reformed monastery of Melk in Austria. It is printed in Pez, *Anecd.* vol. VI, pt iii, p. 326.

"Moreover, I beg to be instructed how we must understand that oath which abbots swear at their confirmation, and which runs: *I will myself keep the Rule of St Benedict, and will cause my brethren to keep it, so help me God and these holy Gospels [upon which I swear]*. If this oath is to be understood strictly, what abbot can come to salvation? since **many things are contained in the Rule which are kept neither by superiors nor by their subjects.**"

Cardinal Nicolaus Cusanus or de Cusa (Cues on the Moselle, 1401-64) may perhaps be said to share with Gerson the title of greatest churchman of the fifteenth century. A remarkable scholar and philosopher, prominent at the Council of Bâle, he was appointed as papal legate to reform the German Church in 1451. In so far as that reform succeeded (I deal with it in my last volume) the credit belongs in great part to Cusanus. After his legatine work, he sent the pope proposals for an efficient reform, which remained unnoticed. In one of his sermons, after pointing out how a person or an institution may keep its outward form when its inward spirit is gone, he continues:

"And, if we consider rightly, the whole Christian religion, with few exceptions, hath degenerated into an appearance; even as we see **in many Religious**, where among many [*plures*] **nothing but the outward habit is left**, and nothing of the spirit of the founder of the Order; but among them we see certain statues, some of gold, some of silver, pewter, [copper], lead, iron, stone, wood or earth, and so forth. Now there seem to be nine orders in this Church of the Wicked, even as there are nine in the Church of those who fight truly for God. [The earthen images make God their belly; the wooden are covetous; the stony, hard hearted; the iron, miserly; the leaden, slothful; the pewter, lascivious; the copper, proud; the silver, pedants; the golden, vain.] Of this sort are all those who love themselves, making themselves the end of their religion, and using Christ's form as a means for the easier obtainment of their own desires. In all these men Christ is borne like an image hawked about by deceivers, to wit, indulgence-mongers, who show their cross and relics for gain"<sup>1</sup>. [In another place, after showing how Charles the Great and other princes had worked not merely indirectly for Church reform, but directly and in person, Cusanus adds]: "**And would that, today also, princes would devote their energies** to the removal of public and wicked faults, and especially the great scandals which take place in Religion, as **the fornications of these people who have vowed chastity**;

<sup>1</sup> *Excit.* lib. ix; *Opp.* ed. Bâle, 1565, p. 651.

and, in this connexion, care should be taken of the nuns and of their custody [within their convents]. For St Boniface writeth to King Ethelbald of England that, among Greeks and Romans, the man who had been guilty of incontinence with a nun would be looked upon as having blasphemed God"<sup>1</sup>. [In this matter of lay interference, it will be seen, he differs from St Catharine of Siena but agrees with Savonarola. Other slighter references may be found on pp. 412, 496.]

Dr Felix Hemmerlin, precentor of Zürich, wrote his *De Nobilitate* in about 1450. There he says:

"The effect of prohibition is that...among all Religious, lechery is the more ardent" [in illustration of which he tells an anecdote which, however improbable and apparently exaggerated, must not prevent our allowing to his judgement that modified credence which we give to all honest satirists. The Swiss historian Hottinger quotes another saying of his which I have not been able to verify in the rare original. It runs]: "**Those who found convents, chantries and so forth, or contribute to their maintenance and endowment, are a cause of much mischief**, which unavoidably springs from possessions given for such purposes. It is not unusual that, whereas a man thinks to do good, he causes mischief, and such evils are hard to avoid. Therefore I think that when rich folk wish to spend they should choose the safer course. When a father has a well-made and tender daughter of marriageable age, he would do better to get her wedded. It often comes to pass that, when men purpose to give [their daughters] as brides of God, **they give them over to the world and the Devil**; on the other hand, when they give to the world (that is, when they marry their children) then the gift comes to God"<sup>2</sup>.

About 1450, a canon of St-Victor writes:

"**the fervour of every Order is relaxed; the Black Monks are going to ruin, the White are changed**; it is written in the Rule but it is not kept." The modern historian of that Order, an orthodox Roman Catholic, writes repeatedly in the same strain: "the scandal of the decayed Orders," "the lamentably decadent abbeys [of the late fifteenth century]"<sup>3</sup>.

The visitors appointed for the province of Salzburg in 1452 left a series of statutes for the great monastery of St Emmeram at Regensburg which have been preserved in a Munich MS. (no. 14196). They complain that:

"the Benedictine Order, **in very many monasteries**, has declined in many ways from its primitive institution...monastic Religion is fallen [*collapsa*] in these parts." And again: "Many [*plerique*] Religious seek not what pertaineth to God but **what pertaineth to their belly**" (foll. 154 a, 157 b).

<sup>1</sup> *De Concordant. Cath.* lib. III, c. xviii, p. 790.

<sup>2</sup> Hemmerlin, *De Nob.* Strassburg, Prüss [1490], cap. 32, fol. 124 b; J. J. Hottinger, *Helvetische Kirchengesch.* vol. II, 1608, p. 845.

<sup>3</sup> Bonnard, vol. I, p. 426; cf. pp. 449, 469.

Dionysius the Carthusian (Dionysius Rickel, 1402-71) was one of the most learned and devout monks of his century; seven folio volumes of his works were published in 1530 as an antidote to Lutheranism, and his *Collected Works*, recently printed by the Carthusians of Montreuil, run to forty large quarto volumes. A recent monograph upon him has come into my hands too late for use, except for the assurance which it gives of essential agreement between the author's views and my own (J. Schäfer, *Das Leben der Geistlichen, nach Dion. Carthusianus*, Schkeuditz, 1904). The writer of the articles *Before the Reformation*, quoted in my preface to Appendix 34, extols Dionysius with some exaggeration, on pp. 205-6, as "one of the greatest men who ever adorned the Church... Emperors and princes, bishops and prelates wrote for his advice from every corner of the world... his book *On the Church* is, next to the main works of Turrecremata and side by side with those of St John Capistran, the most remarkable of our period" (*i.e.* the eve of the Reformation). Yet he ignores the testimony of this great man as to the Church of his day. In article 12 of his *Address to Christian Princes*, Dionysius makes the Church complain:

"Formerly I basked in the regular observance of Religious folk... but now all these things have for the most part been utterly overthrown; and those who should the more effectually pray to God for the people, do now the more horribly [*enormius*] dishonour God. **In the monasteries, the solemn vows are assiduously and most wickedly broken; the cloisters of nuns are open to harlots.** In the colleges, scarce any observance is to be found. Clerks in holy orders and parish priests are polluted, without restraint, by public incontinence, whereby **simple folk are unspeakably scandalized.** The bishops have become more worldly and carnal than secular princes. In the city [of Rome] where the plenitude of all holiness should reign, there reigneth greater wickedness than elsewhere"<sup>1</sup>. [Again, in his *Treatise on the Reformation of Nunneries*<sup>2</sup>: "We know that for much and long time before [Boniface VIII] nuns were enclosed; but for certain years before this Boniface they had fallen away from their enclosure, as they are fallen away nowadays... Even as, through the negligence of their superiors, and through their own frailty and perversity, they have lapsed and gradually slid down to the transgression of their vows and of many other observances whereunto they are bound, even so they have miserably descended and fallen into the violation of their enclosure... Not only to the nuns, but to men also this [conversation of nuns with other folk] is very perilous, as experience, alas! hath fully and frequently proved, and doth daily demonstrate. **Nor can any tongue express how many sins and scandals have arisen,** and do constantly arise, from the fact that nuns go forth from their cloisters and visit secular folk, and that they permit men to enter their cloisters, and converse with them. Would that this were not proved by their swelling wombs, and the proofs [of their sin] that walk about on the earth!<sup>3</sup>... I will say boldly: Alas! the temples of God, the

<sup>1</sup> *Opusc.* p. 746.

<sup>2</sup> Cc. 3 ff.; *Opusc.* pp. 444 ff.; *Opp.* xxxviii, 249.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *De Prof. Monast.* c. 15 (*Opusc.* p. 410; *Opp.* xxxviii, 574); where Dionysius writes: "What need is there to write and to prove how many crimes [*scelera*] and scandals arise from the going-forth of nuns from their

vessels of the Holy Ghost and **the buildings dedicated to God are turned into brothels, unless they be kept under diligent custody.** . . . Believe me, a crowd of priests or Religious hovering or buzzing round expels all holiness from a community of women. If therefore any priest seem to be bound by foolish familiarity with any one of the sisters, let this not be suffered to grow up; for, once grown, it cannot be removed without great scandal. Let him be rebuked by his superior; if, even so, he cease not from what he has begun, **let him be removed, however useful he may seem.** . . . Let no man, of whatsoever condition, ever appear before you [nuns]; or, if he appear, let him shock your sight as a horrid monster. Wherefore I will that, if she must indeed speak with a man, the veil may be drawn across the grated window to hide one face from the other; nor let [either] be permitted to see that which it is not permissible to desire." [On the other hand, he gives a brighter side to this picture<sup>1</sup>. The nun asks how cloistered women can come to this perfect seclusion and devotion to God, and he answers]: "Dost thou not see **how many there yet are of truly devout nuns**, especially the *Regularissae* in these parts<sup>2</sup>, and certain Clarisses, who do remain most willingly in their perpetual enclosure, and are comforted from on high with spiritual consolations; nuns to whom it would be as irksome to leave their cloister as it is to thee to remain always therein?" [But the whole context of the treatise shows that Dionysius thinks of these as brilliant exceptions. Similarly, he maintains that the Carthusian monks are not decayed, mainly because they do really observe St Benedict's Rule about private property]; "whereas other Orders, so far as **innumerable monasteries** are concerned, **have decayed through the admission of private possessions**, and are daily degenerating more and more, in spiritual and in temporal things, as we know by lamentable experience"<sup>3</sup>. [Speaking of "priests and clerics, and especially Religious"], he adds: "But, alas! these are for the most part gone backwards, casting away the yoke of Christ and the institutes of their Rule and the canons and decrees of the holy fathers and the monastic profession; so that, where all devotion once abounded, and the greatest spirituality and the most exemplary life, now on the contrary there abound all aversion, **foul**

cloisters, seeing that these are proved enough and more than enough by teeming wombs and proofs that walk upon the earth." The phrase *testes super terram* occurs also in visitatorial documents, e.g. *Coll. Anglo-Prem.* vol. II, pp. 66, 97, 121, 182; vol. III, p. 207, where its significance is ignored by the editor.

<sup>1</sup> *De Ref.* art. 1; *Opp.* xxxviii, 248.

<sup>2</sup> These *Regularissae* were reformed nuns of the Augustinian Order, for whom Dionysius wrote his treatise *De Professione Monastica*: they accepted Boniface's statute as to complete claustration. Elsewhere (*Opp.* xxxviii, 246) Dionysius mentions the Carthusian nuns as being strictly claustrated. About this same time (1451), the Council of Mainz complained "many scandals often occur because Boniface VIII's bull *Periculoso* is not obeyed" (Harzheim, *Conc. Germ.* vol. v, p. 399 b).

<sup>3</sup> *Opp.* xxxviii, 237.

**carnality, and scandalous life**"<sup>1</sup>. [And, again, these false clerics and Religious] "**terribly scandalize the people of God**, and are utterly unworthy of the goods of the Church which they consume. And some of them are so hardened and vicious that they apply to their own uses—not to say, for the uses of **their harlots and their children**—those things which are offered for the repair of their church and for the necessities of divine service or the decent ornament of their sanctuary... Alas! many, like the sons of Eli, seek not only a sufficiency, but also a superabundance and more delicate things, and procure provocations to lust"<sup>2</sup>. [And again]: "Certainly, all really devout and fervid folk have to bewail the deformation of the Church; **destruction and ruin and perversity in monasteries and collegiate bodies within every tribe and tongue and nation of Christendom**; and, especially, the fact that faithless heretics and impious Christians profane the holy places, persecute the righteous, and seek to slay them" [an allusion to the Hussite wars<sup>3</sup>. In another place, commenting on *Cant. Cant.* iii, 2, he makes the Church say]: "Both in Religious and in seculars of this day I have found great deformation and scandals, rather than edification and help"<sup>4</sup>. [Again, in another passage:] "The ardour of divine love... hath grown so cold in Christian men's hearts... that even the monastic Order, or the life of cloisterers, has fallen to so great a transgression of its Rule... 'The stones of the sanctuary are scattered' (Lam. iv, 1), that is, Religious and priests and clergy, especially the prelates, who are bound as stones of the temple of God to lie still in secret and to consolidate the stability of the rest, 'in the top of every street,' that is along the broad road of vice, nay, literally, they wander hither and thither in all the streets, distracted with various desires, whereas they ought rather to sit in the cloister or the community or the chamber, and to spend their thoughts, with pure mind, upon God alone"<sup>5</sup>. Good cloisterers, he says again, are in these days **scarcely one-tenth** of the proportion which they once bore to the whole body of Religious<sup>6</sup>.

Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471) needs no introduction. My 2nd, 3rd and 4th quotations are from *The Imitation of Christ*, bk 1, chs. 18, 19. The later and more definite hints come from chapters 1-4 of his *Dialogus Novitiorum* (*Opp.* ed. Sommalius, 1607, pp. 502 ff.).

"For I see many leave the world [for the cloister], and yet return afterwards to a worldly life. Others again, as I observe, take the habit of Religion, but **languish away from their early fervour**... For **many** wish so to serve God as though they should suffer nothing grievous, but live here [in the cloister] with all jocundity... Thus the inexperienced and newly-converted young man, unless he flee and separate himself from worldly society, is quickly kindled with the fire of carnal concupiscence, and will be defiled with the pitch of a

<sup>1</sup> *Opp.* II, 498.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* III, 275.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* III, 716; cf. III, 125, and x, 93, 543.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* VII, 351.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* IX, 367.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* x, 403.

life of lubricity, running like a fearless and unbridled horse, and like an unreasoning madman, through the fatal ways of gluttony, lechery, covetousness, pride and envy... Dost thou not see **how many have withdrawn** from this religiosity [which is our ideal], and how few have endured therein to the end?" Typical of the author's outlook, as a member of one of the newest reformed Congregations, is chapter 25 of the first book of the *Imitation*: "Oh how sweet and pleasant a thing it is, to see brethren fervent and devout, well-mannered and well disciplined! And on the contrary how sad and grievous a thing it is to see them live in a dissolute and disordered sort, not applying themselves to that for which they are called! How hurtful a thing it is, when they neglect the good purposes of their vocation, and busy themselves in that which is not committed to their care! A fervent Religious person taketh and beareth well all that is commanded him. But he that is negligent and lukewarm hath tribulation upon tribulation, and on all sides is afflicted; for he is void of inward consolation, and is forbidden to seek outward comforts. A Religious person that liveth not according to discipline, lieth open to great mischief, to the ruin of his soul. He that seeketh liberty and ease, shall ever live in disquiet; for one thing or other will displease him. **How do so many other Religious, who are strictly bound under claustral discipline?** They rarely go abroad, live abstractly, are coarsely clothed, labour much, speak little, wake long, rise early, prolong their prayers, read frequently, and keep themselves in all discipline. Look at the **Carthusians, Cistercians, and monks and nuns of divers Orders**, how they rise every night to sing psalms to God; and therefore it would be disgraceful that thou shouldst be sluggish at so holy a time, when so great a multitude of Religious begin to jubilate to God."

Rodrigo, bishop of Zamora in Spain, dedicated to Pope Paul II (1464-71) his *Mirror of Human Life*. It is in the form of alternate sections, in which the author sets forth first the advantages of every profession or calling, and then its disadvantages. In book II he comes to the clergy, and then (chs. 21-4) to a comparison between the Regulars and the Seculars; he finds a natural difficulty in preferring either absolutely to the other. Chapter 25 deals with *The excellency and praise of the monastic and Religious life, and several causes why it should rather be chosen than any other manner of life*. It begins:

"To extol monastic and Religious life with praise and eulogy would be no other than to add light to torches; for this manner of life possesses all that contributes to living well and happily and to true felicity. To put all in one word, **the life of Religious has this property, that it seems nearer and more acceptable to God than others;** for, as saith St Paul, 'he that is joined unto God is one spirit with Him.' For St Jerome also confesses that no better men can be found, than those who have done well in monasteries... Religious, indeed, are occupied sometimes in reading, and oftentimes in prayer, nor doth one impede, but increase, the other. Then comes the preaching of God's word, than which no occupation can be more pleasing to Him. Finally they pass on to study liberal arts, learning or teaching, and



writing for posterity such doctrine as may instruct and save mankind; and none of their time is idle. Since, therefore, as Cicero saith, 'nothing is sweeter than the memory of time well-spent,' herein are Religious richest.... And, in brief, there is this difference between monastic life and other professions, that, in proportion as the former strive after salvation, the latter seek perdition. For, in proportion as they invite and help and compel us to save our souls, in that proportion do we hinder ourselves.... Secular folk... because the life of Religious is humble, and opposed to the world, and not clad in soft raiment, therefore they reject it and count it as madness; yet in a brief while they shall see how [Religious] are counted among the saints, and their lot is for everlasting. We plainly see, therefore, the extreme excellence of this regular and monastic life, and its perfection in comparison with other worldly states.

"Ch. 26. *Of the difficulties of Religious life, and of the labours and vexations of Religious in general.*

"That Religious and monastic life is laudable and perfect and acceptable to God, no man doubts. But different things suit different men; one is more apt to one, another to another. Moreover, it is one thing to be a Religious, another thing to live like a Religious. **Many are Religious in name, but few in deed**.... I confess that in monasteries God Himself is known; there are the knowledge and love and worship of God; yet these things may be fulfilled in other states of life, and would that men fulfilled them as worthily and as truly as they know them! For every man knows how he may please God; and if he does this he is truly religious. For he binds [*religat*] himself to God who worships Him in piety and humility, and banishes indiscipline. I confess that **these things may be more easily practised in monasteries, if there be bodily strength and power of mind to support them**. Then, men say that quiet of mind is to be found in monastic Religion; to these I might say: if quiet of mind is the end of your hopes and wishes, why then do you stand in war? In whatever state you live, who will make war against you but yourself?... You have seen **very many men** that wear the Religious habit running about from disquiet to disquiet, or **apostatizing**; others falling away from the work they had begun by reason of lack of bodily necessities, of whom it is written that 'many have sinned for want'<sup>1</sup>. Though this, I confess, must be imputed not to holy Religion but to their own want of probity; yet the matter needs no small deliberation and counsel. Therefore, in my opinion, monastic and Religious life should be chosen especially by such men as fear no fall; on the other hand, it should not be professed by the imperfect and the frail, nor should it, again, by those who have not yet succeeded in mortifying their vices, or at least it should be deferred until a later time. Moreover, you yourself know how certain Religious of our own day are living, men who go astray from the very womb of their Rule; you know in what

<sup>1</sup> Eccclus. xxvii, 1, where A.V. has "for a small matter."

way of obedience and poverty and chastity they keep their Religion; in such men, I think, there is more fear of peril than hope of improvement. Hence a certain wise man, expounding that verse of Lamentations, '**The stones of the sanctuary are scattered**,' says, 'We lament for the Religious, entangled in worldly affairs; for there is no action of worldly life which is not administered nowadays by Religious'<sup>1</sup>. Go through all men's occupations and offices; you will find Religious there<sup>2</sup>. In worldly wise they do worldly business, to which I wish that they came for the sake of improvement, or by due vocation; but, alas! they thrust themselves in for the sake of covetousness or of promotion, or perchance for wantonness and to gain exemption; they shake obedience to their superiors from their neck, and **act in contradiction to their [three] principal vows**, the obligation whereof places them in a state of perfection." [Ch. 27 is far more diffuse; Rodrigo discusses the question scholastically, with numerous citations]: "We must pay attention to St Augustine's words; he confesses that no better men are found than those who in monasteries have gone forward [to good], but, again, none worse than those who have failed. **For it is certain that far more fail than those who advance.** For, as St Jerome saith: 'Virtue is rare and difficult, and few men seek her.' Moreover, Aristotle saith in his Ethics: 'It is very difficult to keep the middle way of virtue'; wherefore many more fail than those who succeed; even as, when men shoot arrows at the centre of the target, more fail than those which hit the mark... Since therefore we must decide that the majority fail in every state, there is no doubt that Religious fail more grievously. For who cannot see how plentiful and numerous the Religious are, yet who seeth not **how few of them are holy**?<sup>3</sup>... Moreover, the peril of Religious consisteth more especially in this that, whereas they are bound [*religati*] to God, when they grieve to be so bound, they loose and lose themselves, not considering that things well bound are more securely kept, while things loosened are easily lost... But, to make a long story short, if you would know **the purpose, the manners, the life of very many** [*plurimorum*] Religious, consider that the chapterhouse is odious to them, while outside it there is murmuring and envy; by night they keep no vigils, by day they do no work. The monk labours to be made abbot. The abbot is a belly-god [*ventrosus*], the prior grows fat; the mendicant friar flatters the great and loves earthly things; the [mere] cloisterer is suspicious; the bursar hoards money; the infirmary is a concubinary; the sacristan is passionate; the lay-brethren pray not, but preach for gain; the guardian goes on horseback<sup>4</sup>; the minister-provincial proclaims; the minister-general generates [children].

<sup>1</sup> We have seen that this interpretation was adopted by, or perhaps originated with, Cardinal Hugues de St-Cher.      <sup>2</sup> Compare Chaucer, *C.T.* D. 835.

<sup>3</sup> "Quis enim non cernit Religiosorum tam copiosam numerositatem, sed quis non videt tam paucorum sanctitatem?"

<sup>4</sup> "Guardian" is the superior of a convent among the Franciscans, to whom riding was forbidden except under great necessity.

"Moreover, the peril and difficulty of this estate may be gathered from the multitude of precepts and burdens in the Orders. For, as Augustine saith: 'Where many precepts are, there are many transgressions.' For Religious have far more precepts than men of any other estates; nay, as I have said above, oftentimes what is meritorious in others is sinful and perilous in them. Nor does it help you to plead that not all the precepts are binding [Jerome and Bernard cited to the contrary]. O, how many precepts are there nowadays in the Orders! O, how many bonds are multiplied! O, how few and tardy are the remedies! Christ would seem to be speaking of these: 'They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders.'... We must confess that **there are very many perils and inconveniences in Religion, and more difficulties and labours. Yet, it may be believed that these are more easily absorbed by the very many good things which Religious do, and that [the fallen] will thereby be enabled to rise again more readily, especially by reason of their intention which is directed upwards to God. Moreover, they have fellows by whom they may be helped; and to these may apply what I have said in chapter 24. Finally, I confess that it is possible, but I should say that it is difficult; for the precepts are plain and the fulfilment is doubtful; the commands are certain, but the transgressions more certain still; vices are not hidden, but virtues are not seen; the perils are manifest, nor can they be met without risk, but the remedies are doubtful, nor can they be sought without great labour. We fall more easily than we rise again; let men consider whether companions do indeed help the man who wishes to harm himself, whereof a certain wise man saith: 'What help is there in a friend, if our spirit, still closer to us, harms us?' Yet I confess that, to good and devout Religious, such perils and difficulties and labours afford a sort of contest and of exercise, wherein religious victors receive the more glorious crowns; and (as I said above, treating of the labours and perils of the ecclesiastical estate) the fault is not in Religion but in those that abuse Religion; nor doth the reproof fasten upon Religion, but upon those who defile Religion; wherein we need not marvel that there should be a multitude of perils, since there is such abundance of rewards to the violent and to those who fight well.**" [The next chapter, 28, inculcates consideration of character, circumstance, etc. before taking the vows: "yet we would not that our words should be taken in the spirit of dissuading from the vows," which would be wicked. The next two, devoted to a series of comparisons between the rules and ideals of different Orders, contain no indications, favourable or unfavourable, comparable to those in the earlier chapters. The book then ends with a dedication to the pope.]

Werner Rolewinck was a Carthusian, who printed his book in praise of Westphalia and Saxony generally, a little before 1490; it was reprinted in 1514, and again in Leibnitz's *Scriptores* (vol. II, A.D. 1711) from which I translate here (p. 633). He writes all through in a tone of high-pitched

panegyric, dedicating his work to a group of noble Westphalian patrons. This remarkable province (he says) has hitherto been strangely silent, like Rome, which did greater things than Greece but produced no such great writers to record them; Rolewinck will now try to supply this defect (preface, p. 608). His first sentence strikes the key-note: "Westphalia, with which we are now concerned, is a land not of vines but of virility—*non vinifera sed virifera*, by so much the more highly privileged from God Almighty, Creator of all things, as it transmits the more precious jewels (so to speak) to earth and to heaven." It is in this spirit that he approaches the subject of Church and Religious life.

"I have never been in any other province wherein I have not found Westphalians, and many of them, in almost every estate; some in the lowest rank, others middling, some likewise in the highest, raised to every degree of dignity to the honour of their native land and to the glory of Christendom. How many are there scouring the world and preaching peace and good tidings! How many remain at home and serve their parishes! How many, panting after the winning of souls, are teaching the clergy how to live! And, although some are gifted neither with melody of voice nor with sweetness of speech, when compared with other nations, yet you will find them showing such diligence in chant and in most holy discourse that (wonderful to relate!) they please men, if not with harmonious symphony or with foolish eloquence, yet by their mere simplicity. Moreover, they are sometimes marvellously confident in mind, as though they were apt to recall, or perfectly to complete, things which slip from other men's hands. Cast your eyes around, and you will see one man mounting the pulpit as though he were about to drive all vices into exile beyond the confines of Sarmatia; to banish luxury from the rich, thieving from servants, complaints from the poor, envy from the common folk, pride from the nobles, treachery from the courtiers, self-indulgence from lawyers and covetousness from all. Another you will find shouting with all possible emphasis<sup>1</sup>, as one who is **ready to reform, and bring back to prosperity the [monastic] Rules that are now fallen, and their reputation that is now departing together with their possessions**. Another is troubled over the matter of monastic discipline, and is eloquent even down to the smallest things that can be blamed. In short, they steadily perform all that pertains to a churchman's office. One plays the organ, another rings the bells, a third goes round the church and trims the lamps, places images, adorns the walls, sweeps the floor, and disposes all things most pleasantly to [the general] wish. And, lest anything be wanting, a fourth opens the tombs and, despite sweat and stench, carries out the funeral rites. Are these other than works of piety, whereby God is honoured and our neighbours are helped?... I had almost forgotten to speak of holy Religion, whether I had found the Westphalians labourers in that vineyard, or whether I had found them more numerous than others. Here I can easily

<sup>1</sup> *Capitularibus rumoribus obstrepere*; this might possibly mean "shouting down the gossip of the chapterhouse."

make up my mind ; for my experience is that, in other provinces, I have found more than half [Westphalians], as five in a single monastery, or again a third; and they succeed each other in turn, in wonted number and in faithful work. I can bear witness also to the great almsgiving, both in foundations of hospitals and in building churches and monasteries; [I can testify] how fervent their devotion is and has always been in this matter, when abundance smiles upon them either through paternal succession or from some other source."

Johann v. Trittenheim or Tritheim (Trithemius) was born in 1462, fought his way up from the plough to Heidelberg university, and, after hard experiences as a wandering scholar, took the Benedictine vows at Spanheim, where he was elected abbot at the extraordinarily early age of twenty-one. He made Spanheim a place of almost European reputation for learning; the library, which had less than fifty volumes, was increased by more than 2000 new acquisitions. He ransacked many other libraries for his historical compilations; and though he often shows a medieval want of discrimination in his use of materials, his writings have preserved many things which are lost to us in the original. For his own time, he is recognized as one of the most trustworthy authorities both for ecclesiastical and for civil affairs. After twenty-one years of rule, his position at Spanheim was made intolerable by an unruly faction; he resigned the abbacy for that of St Jakob at Würzburg, and died twelve years later (1516). The following quotations date mostly from about 1490, when he was at the height of his power and reputation. References are to his *Opera Pia et Spiritualia*, Mainz, 1604, and to a separate offprint, *Joh. Trit. ad Monachos Dehortationes*, Rome, 1898.

Naturally criminals form only a minority in the Order; in that sense they are "few"; yet, again, they are "many" in the sense that they very seriously affect its reputation and need the most painful attention on the part of the authorities<sup>1</sup>. For want of this, things are now grown almost desperate:

"Kings and princes of old were wont to build and endow monasteries and churches: but now, with few exceptions, they have become robbers, and lay violent hands upon Church property." [For **nobody now builds churches or monasteries**], "since, where covetousness is seen to abound among the priests, the lay folk refuse the wonted honour and reverence.... For they add: '**Lo! these sinful priests and monks have gotten riches; lo! they scorn the service of God and consume their wealth with harlots**; they have no care for honesty, no anxiety for holiness of life! Why therefore should we delay or hesitate? Why do we not attack their worldly goods, that this wicked pride may be humbled?'... It is only our sins which have made us contemptible before God and man." [And again, after enumerating past glories, he appeals to St Benedict in person:] "Where now is thine ancient beauty and adornment? Where is holy life, or saving study of the Scriptures? Where are learned and holy abbots, and monks devoted to regular observance? **Lo! thou holdest more than ten thousand monasteries** in thine Order, whereof (as we believe) **scarce one thousand have been kept to any sort of regular observance**. For thine abbots scorn regular discipline, neglect the

<sup>1</sup> *Dehort.* p. 231 (*Lib. Pent.* ch. 1).

cure of souls, are devoted to worldly vanities and intent upon worldly wealth, and drowned in the delights of the flesh; even as an illustrious poet, who is still alive, hath said: 'Our abbots and prelates, neglecting divine worship and spurning the Almighty's commands, indulge in Bacchus and minister to Venus; they worship gold and erect altars to Money; they pour wine from golden vessels, their vaults are bright with gold, they cover their harlots with gems, and feast their hounds; they are adorned with the spoils of the poor and rich with robbery; elated with their success, they laugh at heaven and hell.' They care nought for the cure of souls, they have no love for God, no reverence for the saints, no practice of virtues. My brother-abbots, I pray that our own [reformed] Congregation [of Bursfeld] may have no abbots of this sort; I pray that our commonwealth may know no such rulers. Yet I fear—nay, if I may say it, **I know—that such are to be found even among us**, men who in name are reformed but in deed are deformed. There are, I say, abbots glorying in the name of reformation, yet ambitious, vain, proud, given over to the pleasures of the flesh, impatient of seclusion and thinking all occasions fit for flitting hither and thither at excessive expense. Lo! this man scorns the discipline of the Rule and sits in drunkenness all day long with frivolous persons; another holdeth light the gentleness of the saints, and busieth himself with lawsuits; another sits and gambles at the board; another fool dances to the timbrel. What shall I say of **these buildings, curious and superfluous**, which are no less a cause of reprehension than of expense? The walls are adorned with vain paintings; the windows stare with monuments of folly; the walls rise high, and the pinnacles of the roof gleam with gold. **Shame withholds me from treating of the other plague-spots of certain abbots**, their lust, their flesh-eating, their abuse of [public] baths, their gaming and their hunting. Would that these were cut off, who bring our Congregation to confusion with their abominable manners! Lo! reverend fathers, we have heard a brief report of the estate of our commonwealth, it now remaineth to consider the remedy"<sup>1</sup>.

In his address to his fellow-abbots assembled in General Chapter, he recurs constantly to the same theme; it will suffice to quote a few extracts here:

"The monks of our time are no longer, as of old, distinguished

<sup>1</sup> *Opp. Pia*, pp. 855, 859, 861. The hot baths of the Middle Ages, especially at places of great resort like Baden and Pfäfers, enjoyed and deserved the worst of reputations. Trithemius writes elsewhere (*Dehort.* p. 260): "Lo! [thou unmonastic abbot], thou huntest with filthy hounds, against Church law; lo! thou delightest in fleshly pleasures, against all honesty; lo! worst of all, thou scornest thy vow of chastity and wastest the substance of St Benedict with harlots and pandars. Thou fearest not to spend thirty or forty gold pieces at the baths, and thou refusest even a single piece to St Benedict. I lie, if I know not certain abbots who have spent more than fifty florins at the baths, yet some of them are the first to resist payment of subsidies to the [General] Chapter" (*De Statu*, c. viii).

either by knowledge of the Scriptures or by holiness of manners. **Ye may perchance find devout monks even now, though few; but these are simple folk and unlearned.**" "We see many monasteries founded according to the Rule of St Benedict, wherein we find no vestige of regular discipline beyond the name and the habit." [He calls upon Gregory the Great to look down from heaven]: "Behold now the manner of monastic life, O reverend pontiff, devoid of all honesty and full of all foulness. See how monasteries of thine Order, dedicated to God, are now given into the hands of [secular] clerics; and these places, which of old might be compared to choirs of angels, are now become brothels of harlots"<sup>1</sup>. [In unreformed houses] **"they no more care for these three vows of Religion, which for their excellence are called *substantial*, than if they had never promised to keep them...**The whole day is spent in obscene talk; all their time is devoted to gaming and feasting; there is never any talk of reform... **They spurn the vow of poverty, ignore that of chastity, and make light of obedience.** And, in their refusal of chastity, would that they at least deigned to be continent! for the dung of their vices smokes all round, and all men know that which we alone ignore, who are bidden to amend them!... **Vice and crime have free play; virtue alone is not admitted [into the convent];** they laugh if any man begin to speak to them of penitence, and (in Vergil's words) **they despise both heaven and hell.** They have no fear of punishment or of the Judge; you may see how they abound, as in a whirlpool of all vices, in pride and avarice, uncleanness and gluttony, sloth and wrath and hatred and every fleshly lust, which they rejoice to seize if they can, and sedulously yearn after if they cannot. *The beasts are rotten in their own dung*<sup>2</sup>, and, as though they had lost their reason, they will not be recalled." [Many find excuses, or procure dispensations, for quitting the cloisters where they first made their vows.] "We find by the proof of experience that these monks, of whom I speak, become almost mad after their transference from the Order; prone to all turpitude, desperate, without love for God or devotion or affection or piety or conscience or honesty; savage, troubled, crazy and obstinate; so that they care not for God or His kingdom, for purgatory or hell or death or penitence or virtue or good life; to these things they are indifferent, they will listen to nothing... Wherefore such apostates, as men set free from long imprisonment, rush boldly into every vice, and make up for their loss of time [in the past] by the magnitude of their [present] sins." **"Among our own ['Reformed' Congregation of Bursfeld] there are (God amend it!) many abbots and monks coarser than peasants, more cruel than beasts,** who are neither bent by mildness nor ever persuaded by even the holiest exhortations, to keep God's commands or those of the

<sup>1</sup> *Dehort.* pp. 233-5. Cf. p. 261: "I am ashamed to say the things which many abbots shrink not from doing."

<sup>2</sup> *Dehort.* pp. 267-8. The quotation is from Joel i, 17, where the Vulgate has "computruerunt jumenta in stercore suo."

Rule." [And then, directly addressing himself to the delinquents among his fellows]: "O abbots, abbots! it is ye who are the cause of all the evils in your monasteries... Believe me, it is to you that the damnation of your monks will be imputed; for, though set to rule them, ye have neglected to instruct them in words. Woe unto you! **it would be better for you if ye had never been abbots. Ye spend your days in covetousness and lust**, ye neglect God's service, ye despise the cure of souls, ye think not of the path of observance; ye, who should correct your monks' sins, commit sins yourselves, and wink at other men's lest your own be rebuked"<sup>1</sup>.

[Therefore past reforms have been transitory, and present reform is an urgent matter, one of life or death]: "O holy father Benedict, who of old wast so solicitous for thy Religion, wherefore dost thou desert us at the last? . . . Succour us, help us, bring us aid; for **never was thy Religion beset with such grievous evils!** . . . All who might restore it are neglectful; others, who seem to have a zeal for discipline, do indeed strive to help, but are powerless"<sup>2</sup>. [The evil has become chronic]; "In this [mine own] monastery of Spanheim, as also in all others, so far as I can gather from conjecture and from the letters of my predecessors, **for about two hundred years past, the purity of monastic institutions has failed**, and the disorderly lives of the monks have utterly wasted their whole substance of earthly possessions"<sup>3</sup>. [Tritheim rehearses past reforms; none has been really effectual]: "he who falleth, striveth oftentimes to rise again; but thou, [venerable mother Religion], once fallen, hast never wholly arisen . . . for, from the days when our Religion first fell [before the Cluniac reform], **there hath never been any general reformation. O quam facilis descensus Averni!**"<sup>4</sup> [A few pages on, he rehearses even more recent reforms, and adds]: "Where is that promised observance of the Rule? Behold, brother abbots, **ye have in your Chapter 127 abbeys, whereof, in the three aforesaid [Reformed] Congregations, scarce 70 have remained under reform.** . . . Look round at the life both of abbots and of monks, freed from the law of monastic honesty and smoking all around, **things well-known, which I am ashamed to pronounce, and you, most reverend fathers, would shudder to hear**"<sup>5</sup>. [Moreover, the evil spreads from the top downwards]: "Reform must begin with the abbots, and be continued downwards to the monks . . . there are certain deformed abbots who would fain compel their monks to reform, yet who themselves will not submit for a moment to observance of the Rule . . . that which they forbid to their subjects, they blush not to do for themselves"<sup>6</sup>. [And, in another place and at another occasion, he bursts out into a similar despairing enumeration of past struggles and failures. Where, he asks, are all the great monastic reforms of the past? Charles the Great, Cluny, Monte

<sup>1</sup> *Dehort.* pp. 245, 263.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 267.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 270: the whole of the next chapter (xii) is devoted to this subject.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 269.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 236.



Cassino, Fulda, Hersfeld, Trèves, Cologne, Hirschau, Kastel, etc.? Then he adds]: "**All these have decayed from their first institution, and have been either wholly or to a great extent obliterated.**" [Their numbers were no safeguard against decay; the Cluniacs once had 1500 houses. Nor, again, their smallness; for all the others were far smaller; yet all are fallen. We of the Reformed congregation of Bursfeld are neither very numerous nor very few; **yet we fear now to fall**; and, indeed, within our own existence of less than 80 years, certain of our houses have in fact fallen again.] "And those monasteries which we now see well disposed both spiritually and materially, **we fear will fall within a few years.** This we infer from plain reason, if we recall the past. Behold! how many monasteries and convents and religious houses we see nowadays miserably debased on both the spiritual and the material side, which we know to have been well reformed within a few years past! In short, such and so many Religious of divers Orders have fallen away from religious observance almost in our own day, and are daily falling away, that the more recent reforms seem already most ancient, and utterly obliterated"—*antiquissimae et abolitae prorsus*<sup>1</sup>.

One of the most conspicuous figures in French Church history at the end of the Middle Ages was Gui Jouenneaux [Guido Juvenalis], abbot of St-Sulpice-de-Bourges and papal commissary for the reformation of the Benedictines in France. His *Vindication of Monastic Reform*, printed in 1503, describes the state of things which it was his task to combat. I printed in 1915 a full summary of this rare book, with long quotations (*Medieval Studies*, no. 11, Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 2s. 6d. net); critical readers may there find full vouchers for the statements in my text. Similar evidence, according to Dom Ursmer Berlière and Prof. P. Imbart de la Tour, is to be found in contemporary treatises by Gui's friend, Charles Fernand, and by Michel Bureau; but I have never been able to get at their writings; however, Jouenneaux is admittedly representative of the whole group.

Burchard, the contemporary diarist of the Roman court, writing under the year 1493, tells us how:

"Alexander [VI] imitated and exaggerated the custom, already begun by Innocent [VIII], of giving out his own daughters in marriage. Therefore all the clergy are busied now, and diligently busied, with begetting children; so that, from the highest to the lowest, they keep concubines, even publicly, under the figure of matrimony. Unless God forbid, this corruption will pass on to the monks and nuns, although **almost all the monasteries in Rome have already become brothels**, without contradiction of any man" (*Diarium*, ed. Thuasne, vol. II, p. 79).

At the end of the fifteenth century, and at Paris, the zealous and orthodox professor Jean Standonck

"brought great charges against **all Religious folk** because, as he said, they keep not their Rule **and lead a dissolute and abominable**

<sup>1</sup> *Opp. Pia*, p. 875.

life, and, contrary to their vows, disobey their prelates; and, with all this, there is no chastity nor poverty left in Religion, but all have private property; moreover the said Religious, contrary to their Rule, eat flesh, as hath been reported to the King." The representatives of religious reform, without contesting the general truth of all this, represent to the king "that all the disorder and dissolution in Religion is caused by the pope's dispensations and commends," and beg the king to put an end to such practices<sup>1</sup>.

At the same time, a most significant letter reaches us from Ireland. The English kings had always been strong enough to resist this *commendam* system which was ravaging Continental monasticism, instead of sharing its profits with the popes, as other princes did. Wolsey was almost the first and only commendatory abbot in England during these five centuries. But in Ireland this royal check was weaker; and, about 1480, an Irish abbot reports to headquarters at Cîteaux that the Cistercian commissary

"having suffered great labours, found the monasteries and convents of the said Order, sad to say, **almost altogether desolate**, and infested with provisions and commends granted by the See of Rome, contrary to the privileges granted and conceded to our Order, and also by the continual and intolerable turmoil of war... Deign [Father Abbot], to procure from the Holy Apostolic See that these provisions and commends may cease from henceforth in Ireland, otherwise, **that little glimmer of religion which remains in this country will probably be quenched**—*alias lux parva religionis que in ea manet extinguetur verisimiliter*"<sup>2</sup>. Apparently nothing effectual was done; for, a few years later, in 1501, we find the abbot of Mellifont, the main Cistercian house in Ireland, writing to the abbot of Cîteaux: "Let it not be hidden from you, most exalted Father, that not long since I wrote to you about the state—or rather, alas! the **ruin and desolation and indiscipline**—*desuetudinem*—of our Order in Ireland." The visitors care more for their own fees than for reform, and sinners are not punished<sup>3</sup>.

The anonymous Carthusian, whose *Origin of Religious* was printed by Martène and Durand in their *Amplissima Collectio* (vol. VI, 1729, coll. 15 ff.), was a Norman of the diocese of Évreux, who wrote about 1490. The book is in the form of a dialogue between Mother Church and the author, her Son. The former recounts how the Cluniacs and others "reformed the deformed Order of the most holy Benedict." To which the Son answers:

"I marvel greatly, Mother, how so holy an Order could so decay." She replies, "Hold firmly, Son, and have no doubt that **extreme wealth hath often been the cause of religious decay in monas-**

<sup>1</sup> *Analecta Gallicana*, vol. II, pp. 189 ff.; cf. pp. 195, 334 ff., 344-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Mélanges d'Histoire offerts à Ch. Bémont*, 1913, pp. 434-5. Another copy, apparently, of this same letter is in the Dijon archives among the Cîteaux MSS. (*Monastères anglais*, liasse intitulée *Correspondance 1478-1628*). The writer there calls himself "Abbot of B.V.M. by Dublin."

<sup>3</sup> Dijon, Archives de la Côte-d'Or, *Monastères anglais*, liasse intitulée *Correspondance 1478-1628*.

**teries, and especially the Benedictine**, which were incomparably better endowed than others. And, on the contrary, poverty hath been the cause of reform. Devotion begat riches; for the faithful, marking the monks' devotion and cult of celibacy and holy conversation in the Lord, gave much wealth to the monasteries for the redemption of their sins. When this was copious and overflowing, then the brethren began to use it not for their needs alone, but for superfluities. Then superfluity, unpruned and unrestrained, begat pomp and pride, and **very many evils** which it is better to pass in silence than to speak of. The faithful, seeing this (and especially princes and temporal lords), not only withdrew their hands from almsgiving to the monks but began to persecute the men themselves, dissipating their possessions by force or malice or cunning or fraud or lawsuits. God permitted this for their amendment; wherefore some returned unwillingly and by compulsion to the love of poverty, and others of their own accord, pruning superfluities in food and clothing, in luxuries and buildings and horses and other things which are altogether foreign to the monastic profession, and at last living in humility and simplicity. This, again, was marked by the faithful, who resumed their earlier devotion towards the monasteries and began not only to give benefactions but also to defend and protect them against those who attacked them. This is the main cause of advance or decay in monasteries. There are other causes also, which I omit, but not without reason. But then [*i.e.* about 500 years ago], St Benedict's Order was in a great measure reformed by these venerable fathers of Cluny, on whose account we have thus digressed, who in early days loved the virtue of poverty and clung to it bravely; and, if we were to touch even superficially upon those words which justice demands in praise of that great Order or of the venerable fathers who flourished therein, it would need a long volume." *Son*. "I doubt not, Mother, the truth of thy peroration; yet I would fain learn whether that ancient glory of holy religion be still alive in these same Cluniacs." *Mother*. "What is that to thee? It is not for us at this time to judge of them; to their own Lord they stand or fall, and would that I could say, they stand! [*et utinam stent!*]. For (as saith St Paul) God is able to make them stand (Rom. xiv, 4)." [Later (col. 93) the Mother speaks less enigmatically; she is now at the end of her story, and dealing directly with the conditions of 1490.] "A great reform of very many monasteries is going on in different parts of the world, and is much needed. And note that **we read of many such reforms, yet scarce any hath remained constant**; nay, rather, after the usual fashion, in process of time, they slide back again into their former sickness after the death of the venerable fathers who reform them." *Son*. "The sense and thought of man are prone to evil, as it is written; and there are very few in whom the virtue of charity is fervent; and on this account, by the temptation of the Devil, who doeth all he can to extinguish religion in the monasteries, men are easily seduced and, setting the feet of their affections beyond the bounds of equity, they are glad to walk in ways that are not good, to walk after their own sins. For doubtless

iniquity would not rule over us if fervent charity dwelt in us; but, when that faileth, many men follow the wickedness of their evil hearts, at the instigation of the evil one, that they may at last be plunged into the gulf of hell." He speaks of the necessity of reform in another place also (col. 62, D, E).

Innocent VIII, in 1490, sent Archbishop Morton a bull "for the Reformation of Monasteries and Exempt Houses."

It has come to the pope, he learned, "not without great displeasure and bitterness of mind, by the report of certain trustworthy persons, that although in times past some monasteries and other religious houses of the Cluniac, Cistercian, Premonstratensian and other divers Orders in the realm of England" [had been founded and endowed by kings and nobles], "and, after such foundations, observance had for some time been kept in some of them by the monks and other Religious dwelling therein, yet for some time past regular observance hath grown cold therein, through our wellbeloved sons the abbots and monks and other Religious of the said monasteries and convents in your city and diocese and province of Canterbury, who have gradually relaxed their way and course of life, and have laid aside the sweet yoke of contemplation; and not only hath the earlier way of life been left, but also, we grieve to relate, in some of them the inmates have given themselves up to a reprobate sense, and put the fear of God behind their backs, and are leading a **wanton and most dissolute life, to the ruin of their own souls, the offence of God's majesty, the dishonour of Religion, and the evil example and scandal of very many folk.**" Therefore the archbishop is given full powers to carry out the necessary reform, and to call in Henry VII, if necessary, to help him by force.

Jean Raulin (1443-1514) was rector of the college of Navarre at Paris; he resigned in 1497 and became a Cluniac monk; in 1501 Cardinal George d'Amboise commissioned him to reform the Benedictines in his province. I have not been able to consult two of his most important treatises on reform, but quote here from his *Lententide Sermons* printed at Venice in 1575. The extracts are from serm. XXII (fol. 52 b), LXXXII (fol. 207 a), LXXXIV (fol. 212 a), xc (fol. 228 a), CXLII (fol. 358 b), CXLVI (fol. 452 b).

"[Christ's] first temptation to gluttony was in the desert, whereby is typified the estate of Religious, which will at last be ruined by gluttony, though that be counted the least of all [seven mortal] sins, as we see fulfilled nowadays. For now gluttony thriveth instead of abstinence; therefore the Devil persuadeth them to make stones into bread; to wit, that the austerity and strictness of Religion should be turned to sweetness and delight." Again: "So the name of Religion hath been corrupted; for then she was called Religion when true Israelites dwelt therein, devout men and full of holiness; but now she is called Region, since worldly folk inhabit her. She was first Religion, because she was relegated from the world; now she is Region, because the world reigneth therein. Her name is corrupted because her good

report is lost; where at first was the Lord's ark, there is now the world's coffer.... The Lord passeth by, and tarrieth not with deformed Religions.... There is no watching therein over young men in the morning, nor at midday over the men, nor at eventide over the grey-beards." Again: "For the revenues bestowed upon clerics and Religious, neither they themselves nor their parents have laboured. 'Others laboured, and ye are entered into their labours'; for those laboured who gave the revenues, and the saints of the early Church laboured, and the holy life of the first Religious, through whose merits these things were given; these bore the burden and heat of the day, but the moderns are in possession. Therefore, though all be bound to praise God, yet this is specially true of Religious, many of whom **hasten through their hours as briefly as they may sing them**, like the jongleurs that wait upon great lords, upon whom their masters spend much in garments and food, yet who seldom labour in their own art: and then they fiddle after dinner, and all the rest of their time they do nothing.... Jeremiah saith, 'Cursed be he that doeth the word of the Lord deceitfully'; they do deceitfully who take the pay and do not the work that should be done, as those canons who sit like sacks upon the bench<sup>1</sup>—nay, **many of them impede those who labour, and brand as papelards those who wish to be continually in the church**; such are prefigured in Saul (1 Sam. xix, 10) who, when David played on the harp before him, would have nailed him to the wall with his spear; for such [as I have described] would extinguish the good men if they could." "Almost all the world is now apostate from God; no man followeth Him nowadays; **but the Devil hath a great abbey and a great congregation of brethren**; let each man see of whose abbey he himself is.... The man who doeth Christ's work is an abomination in these days." "There are four sorts of men who can hardly be converted to Christ.... The fourth sort, is that of evil Religious. For in desert places, **where of old there lived religious men, now there dwell serpents and monsters**; and it is hard to make serpents into men, or to turn stones into sons of Abraham." "There are certain abbeys called Royal, because kings alone have power over them. Such are exempt from the help, custody, protection and teaching of the bishops; whereof they exult, as though sheep should exult to be destitute of the shepherd's care and the dog's watch, and exposed to wolves. For **exemption**, as seen in many [*pluribus*] of the exempt [Religious], is nothing else than **unbridled licence to sin**, and security in sin, the defence of iniquity and the refuge of transgressors."

The great Dominican scholar and preacher, Savonarola (1452-98), was burned by his political enemies as a heretic, but with less justification, if possible, than in the case of Joan of Arc. One of the causes of his ruin was the freedom with which he publicly rebuked the unreformed clergy and Religious of his day. Where a bare page reference is given, my quotations are

<sup>1</sup> "Qui ponunt culum ad bancam."

from *Scelta di Prediche*, etc. ed. Villari and Casanova, Florence, 1898. Others are from Baccini's edition of his sermons, *Prediche*, etc., Florence, 1889.

"The walls [of the Church] are ruined; these, I say, were the Contemplatives; you see few Contemplatives today... **Where are [now] the good examples of priests and of good Religious?**... Those who hate thee, O Lord, are sinners and false Christians, and chiefly those who are set in dignity; and these are they who, nowadays, boast of having removed the rigidity and severity of the canons, the institutes of the holy fathers, and the observance of good laws"<sup>1</sup>. "You see there a priest gambling in public, haunting taverns, keeping a concubine and committing such-like sins; you say in your head, 'That man has set up his ensign for a sign' [Ps. lxxiv, 4, *Vulg.*], that is, has made it manifest. The nuns also 'have set up their ensigns for signs,' for they stay all day long at the grates, chattering with worldly youths"<sup>2</sup>. Again, on the same Psalm, "They have defiled by casting down the dwelling-place of Thy name to the ground," he comments: "Again, they have defiled with **uncleanness and filth and lechery** Thy tabernacle whereon Thy name was called in Holy Baptism. This can be thus expounded, that there is no reverence left, nor fear, nor respect whatsoever towards the virgins who are consecrated to God, whether in the world or **in Religion, in the nunneries**; because they have contaminated everything<sup>3</sup>. And worse still have they done; for they have not only destroyed the Church of God, but set up a church after their own fashion. That is the Modern Church<sup>4</sup>... The sanctuary and choir [of this modern church] are of wood; for in true state of virgins and widows there is no devotion, no dew of grace. Those few virgins that are left in the Church today are foolish virgins, whose lamps lack oil; because, albeit they have virginity of body, they very often lack virginity of mind, and are dry of devotion... They have abolished all the good laws, all the good customs of the Church, they will not even hear them named. Go, read the *Decretum*<sup>5</sup>; how many fair statutes and laws concerning the honesty of the clergy, and the consecrated virgins, and holy matrimony, and kings and princes, how they should bear themselves in the matter of obedience to their pastors. Go, read, I say; and you will find that **nothing is kept that is there written**; the *Decretum* might be burnt, for it is as though it had never been."

[We pass on to another sermon<sup>6</sup>]: "The eighth [cause that calls for reform in the Church] is the denial of what should be believed.

<sup>1</sup> pp. 41-2.

<sup>2</sup> p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> F. T. Perrens quotes Savonarola as saying in another place: "women, in their convents, are becoming worse than prostitutes" (*Jérôme Savonarole*, 2nd ed. p. 85). By a custom too common in France, he gives no reference; but he is a thoroughly trustworthy historian.

<sup>4</sup> p. 46: "Questa è la chiesa moderna." He means, Renaissance art and poetry.

<sup>5</sup> Of Gratian, the first volume of the Corpus of Canon Law.

<sup>6</sup> p. 115.

Look around ; doth it not seem to thee that nobody nowadays believes, or has any faith left, and that all are saying: 'What will come next?' The ninth cause is, the ruin of divine service. Go, behold what is done throughout God's churches, and with what devotion men frequent them, and dost thou not think that God's service is ruined nowadays? Thou wilt say: 'O! there are so many Religious and prelates, more than there ever were!' **Would that there were less!** O clergy, O clergy, through thee is this tempest arisen; thou art the occasion of all this evil! Nowadays, every man thinketh himself happy to have a priest among his family; but I say unto thee that the time will come when it will be said: 'Blessed is that family wherein is no shaveling priest!'"

[All this has its root in the Court of Rome. Like St Antony of Padua two centuries before, Savonarola takes his text from Amos iv, 1: "Ye kine of Bashan that are in the mountain of Samaria"—*vaccae pingues* in the Vulgate—*fat cows*.] "To my mind, this scripture and these fat cows signify the harlots... **A thousand are few, for Rome;** ten thousand are few, twelve thousand, fourteen thousand are few.... These harlots, as I have said unto you, are just a lump of flesh with two eyes, and they are ashamed of nothing. Can it be that you yourselves have no shame? that you are not only concubines, but **concubines of priests and friars**, and that you even do this publicly? Can it be, O cows of Samaria, that ye have no shame? Pardon me, ladies, I use the language of the prophet; and I say it of none who is not so indeed.... God hath sworn upon His Son and upon His Body that bitter days shall come upon thee, O Rome; and upon you also, O cows, shall come bitter days.... Nowadays, men have given themselves to the Church sacraments through custom and outward worship, not through a lively faith nor any inward worship; and the farther they go back with this custom, the worse it will be; for, as I have said unto thee, **men are becoming worse**, and thus will God be more and more provoked to wrath against us"<sup>1</sup>. "The Lord shall tread thee under foot; His feet shall be His horses and armies, and the stranger folk who shall tread under foot the great men of Italy; and forthwith all shall be trodden down—priests, friars, bishops, cardinals and great masters.... I promise thee, Italy, I promise thee, Rome, that since thou hast heaped up a harlot's pay, thou shalt find at last a harlot's reward. Those who are to come are evil. Trust not, O Rome, in saying 'here are the relics, and here is St Peter and so many martyrs' bodies; God will not suffer so great evil here!'. I warn thee that their blood will cry aloud unto Christ to come and punish thee. Trust not, O Rome, to say, 'It is the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord'; for that will profit thee naught. Jerusalem had far fairer relics than thou hast. There were Christ, the Virgin, and His Apostles; there was His cross and sepulchre; there were His kinsfolk; never were there fairer relics than these. Therefore trust not; for I warn thee that thy fate

<sup>1</sup> p. 210; cf. *Pred.* pp. 198 ff., 212 ff.

shall turn into the hands of harlots and wicked men"<sup>1</sup>. [**The Church is a harlot**—*ribalda Chiesa, meretrice Chiesa*—and the sign of her harlotry is in] "evil priests, lukewarm Religious, great masters, and all the rest of the evil folk. Pray ye that God may remove this harlot"; for "thou, harlot-Church, hast manifested thy foulness to the whole world"<sup>2</sup>. "How great is the difference between the present Church (I speak of the evil folk) and that of the past! Knowest thou how great? As between a lioness and a lady." [He quotes Ezekiel xix, 2, "What is thy mother? a lioness; she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions"; the Church is secularized; she lives among lions' whelps.] "And therefore—*patres mei*—pardon me [for my free speech]. If ye dwelt by yourselves, apart from worldly folk, I should have more reverence for you. Religious also—*anche le frati*—dwell among the whelps, to wit in the friendship of lords and tyrants and great masters, and are familiar in their houses. Nuns also dwell among the whelps, chattering all day long with worldly folk; and so all the rest are among the whelps, that is, they dwell among worldly folk, and men take no account of the Christian religion"<sup>3</sup>. [And again]: "Read all histories; you will find that the Church was never in worse case than she is today... **Almost all Religious make it their aim to get bread and money and wax candles**"<sup>4</sup>. "So, at the present day, the priests and Religious are all busy with saying services, and yet they turn not to change their lives"<sup>5</sup>. [Simplicity and self-denial, necessary for all, are most needed by priests and Religious; but] "the lukewarm will not come to this simplicity; they would not listen to us; they have gone away and say, 'We wish to build fair monasteries; they [the laity] wish to build fair palaces.'... Thou, Religious and priest who wouldst live in such pomp, it is no great wonder that thou shouldst daily strive to accumulate more revenues; thou makest merchandise thereof, and to gain them thou standest there in the market-place hunting after money"<sup>6</sup>. "The early fathers ordained these fair Religions, and all the Church ceremonies, which were bound together by the Spirit and by charity. What hath now intervened? **The ceremonies and the outward shells have remained; but the inward things, the inward charity and humility, are all decayed**"<sup>7</sup>.

[He has little hope of general reform; others wish his own reformed convent to enter into the Congregation of Tuscany: but] "all the saints say that what is deformed cannot be reformed. This cannot be denied; for it is the clear conclusion of all the saints, and St Paul saith, 'A little

<sup>1</sup> p. 247. Compare p. 263; the clergy and priests are the root of all the evil; "they say that God hath no providence of the world; they believe not that Christ is in that Sacrament. It begins, however, from Rome (I speak of the evil clergy); there is no faith, neither *fides formata* nor *informata*; nay, not a surmise of faith"—*nè opinione di fede*.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 269-70.

<sup>4</sup> *Pred.* p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 101, 114.

<sup>3</sup> p. 273.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 211.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 513.



leaven corrupteth the whole lump'<sup>1</sup>. [The unreformed Franciscans fall back upon their great collection of papal privileges, the *Mare Magnum*<sup>2</sup>; the vanity of such pleas is exposed by Savonarola. Therefore, as a contemporary chronicler writes, "by bitterly rebuking the sins and vices both of Seculars and of Religious in his day, he aroused against himself very great persecution from many Orders, but especially from the Franciscan Observants"<sup>3</sup>.]

Thuasne, in his comments on Burchard's *Diarium* (vol. II, p. 79), notes how, in 1492, Pierre Dauphin, in a letter to P. Barrotius, bishop of Padua, on the necessity and the difficulty of reforming the nunneries, wrote:

"You have set your hand to **a reformation of the nunneries**; may God lay His hand there with yours, for it is a matter which hath most need of God's help! **How great are the difficulties**, I think I know well from experience, so that I think that writing most true, 'All malice is short to the malice of a woman'" (Ecclus. xxv, 26, *Vulg.*).

The abbots-general of the great Congregations of Marmoutier and Cîteaux presented memorials to the king of France at the assembly of Tours in 1493, summoned to discuss a general reform of the French Church. Each document is, to a considerable extent, apologetic; they admit that there is very serious monastic decay but throw the blame as much as possible upon the long wars; moreover, the latter asserts that real beginnings of reform are already being made. These apologetic pleas give all the more significance to the admitted facts, and to the accompanying protests that the reforms already begun will never be completed without radical amendments in royal and papal policy.

The abbot of Marmoutier pleads that most of the Rules can no longer be kept in their first strictness:

"Since the time [when these Rules were composed], men's common complexions and their span of life have been so shortened that these complexions have not been able to support the austerity of the said Rules in the matter of fasts, complete abstinences and prayers.... Item, they have considered that the [descendants of the] founders [of monasteries] and noble folk will put into them their young children, unable to bear the aforesaid Rules, and that **they thrust in the aforesaid children to avoid beggary** and for their sustenance, and to lighten their own households of these burdens, that the rest may have wherewith to live: also that those who enter, and who are not of age to know the vows and abstinences and austerities, continue their Religious life even as they see the other inmates of the said Religious living. [Also, in consequence of **papal dispensations and commends**, all sorts of folk], though law forbids it, have obtained archbishoprics, bishoprics, abbeys and benefices, and in disorderly numbers, so that they thus possess abbeys and **give them out to farm to married folk**,

<sup>1</sup> *Scelta*, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 321.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 480; cf. *Pred.* p. 335: the Reformer has "so many enemies, without and within; men and women, priests and Religious, nuns and all sorts of folk"; and p. 514: "All the world is against thee; priests, friars and monks."

who set up their abode in the said abbeys with wives, daughters, serving-maids and children; nor do they create or make any [fresh] Religious, while those who are in the abbeys die from day to day. To those few who remain, the said farmers give little pensions, the smallest that they can; and, instead of keeping silence and the cloister and Religious state, nothing is done but **dances and dishonest sports and songs**. [They also wander about outside their monasteries; and, if their finances can be properly administered], **a thousand alms will be given which are not given now**, and the abbeys and cells and priories will be well maintained, and Religion kept and observed."

The abbot of Cîteaux emphasizes the ravage of war still more, and asserts the real beginnings of reform. On the other hand, where these attempts are being made,

"the said commendments have hindered them and do hinder them from day to day. [He names the three great hindrances to reform. The first is, unworthy promotions to abbacies and priorates, often by influence of the local squirearchy.] The second hindrance is the *In Commendam* system, whereby many monasteries, priories and cells, both elective and non-elective, are occupied in great numbers. . . which is **the most horrible confusion** that can be thought of or imagined; for thereby the said monasteries, priories, or other places given *in commendam* are **desolate and destroyed**, divine service is diminished, and the founders' intentions are defrauded in the matter of many holy works. For, where **there were, and ought to be, thirty or forty good Religious**, the commendatory head, by the hands of some dan John, his jackal in that monastery, keeps such husbandry as to reduce it at least to **ten or twelve**. . . **Women enter everywhere**, and the Religious go about wheresoever they please, whereby **chastity and obedience are brought altogether to naught**, and all form of Religion is so estranged and effaced that oftentimes the Religious of such priories or monasteries scarce know what should be the proper form of their habit; and other innumerable evils are caused and perpetrated by these commendments. And when the proper visitors or commissaries of their Order come to visit them, they scarce find a man to speak to, and of all their ordinances men take no account; and, what is more to be feared, **often they are in danger of their persons**. And commonly the said commendmentaries. . . being kinsfolk and friends to great lords, take no account of the ordinances of their father-abbots or visitors, saying that they are not subject to them. For which causes, and many others which are notorious, **it is impossible for any reform to be carried out** during these commendments aforesaid. [The commendmentary, an absentee, eats up the revenues; the community are given up to quarrels, God's service is neglected, the buildings go to ruin.] Nor doth it avail to plead that the non-commendment houses should first be reformed, and then we shall see to the rest; for, considering that **few Religious, as it seems, will be favourable to reform**, it is certain that such contradictors will retire to commendment

monasteries in order to do their own will or lust, or will run away into the world and perpetrate many scandals; and thus the reform could have no effect so long as the said commendments endure.... The Fathers [of Cîteaux] have, in the last twenty years, **sent twice to Rome** to beseech the revocation of the said commendments... wherein they have spent more than fifteen or sixteen thousand ducats. **Yet this hath served them little**, by reason of the pressure and importunities, the prayers and the oaths which the king and other great princes address to the Holy Father, as he says, that he should give them many monasteries and cells *in commendam*, thus violating for this and for that time the privileges [of the Cistercian Order].

"The third hindrance is the recourse to secular justice, by appeals or otherwise, made incessantly not only by abbots and abbesses and priors... but also by ordinary Religious, even by friars, against many punishments or corrections laid upon them in accordance with their demerits.... Wherefore many abbots and visitors, who cannot bear so great an expense (especially such as have a great number of subjects), are oftentimes constrained to dissemble, and to take patience in trust upon divine mercy, until some other day when it shall please God to provide a remedy.... It is a horrible pity to see so many monks and nuns of all Orders pressing suits in secular courts; and there are many who are glad that the suit should last long, to give them occasion to hang about the halls, away from their cloisters, and do much good business; which is a marvellous torment for the abbots and visitors, who have no remedy. When it shall please our most Christian king, protector and defender of the Church, to put an end to these three hindrances... then the holy reform and observance will be easy, as it was in days past before the introduction of such hindrances.... As to the Order of Cîteaux... if they have not been able to reform everywhere [during the past 20 or 30 years], yet, by God's mercy **there are a great number who up to the present time have kept the primitive holiness of the first fathers of the Order, as well as they could**, without deformation.... Further, we plead that the nuns of our Order who are not reformed should be reformed, and should be obliged to keep the bull *Periculoso* [enjoining strict claustration]; and by that means, with the good will of the Fathers of the Order, all that should be reformed within the said Order will easily be done"<sup>1</sup>.

Johann Geiler (1445-1510) was one of the greatest figures in the German church of the year 1500. After studying at Freiburg and Bâle, and taking his Doctorate in Divinity, he was called to Strassburg, where the office of cathedral preacher was instituted for him (1478). Thenceforward his whole life was a struggle against heresy and lay encroachments on the one hand, and clerical abuses on the other. In later life his pronouncements become more pessimistic; and he is said to have uttered before the Emperor, a few years before Luther's appearance, *Es muss brechen*—"the crash must come"! There is a very excellent biography of him by Abbé L. Dacheux, 1876.

He recognizes the root of the evil: "Some come [into Religion]

<sup>1</sup> *Analecta Gallicana*, vol. II, pp. 333 ff.

because, against their own will, they have been cast or thrust in by their parents, **like puppies for the drowning**, for the sole purpose of getting rid of them and being able to give richer dowries to the other children"<sup>1</sup>. [Therefore infractions of the Rule become consecrated by custom.] "Exhort secular priests to live like priests, to attend divine service, to be content with a single benefice, to avoid bad society, and they will answer you: 'Why these innovations? **we do just as our fellows do.**' You will get the same answer from the Religious. Tell the Franciscans not to possess or touch money; tell the Dominicans to renounce their landed and house property; tell the Benedictines to possess neither towns nor castles, and they will answer: 'What is this that you say? We found things thus; the rest are doing the same as we; why make innovations?'" [And again]: "If a Religious wishes to keep his Rule, to live in chastity and continence, to practise obedience, **he is a laughing-stock to his brethren**, who say: 'Behold! this fellow would fain be wiser than the rest! While so many learned folk, lights of the world, are living as we do, this one man would fain act otherwise!'" [These complaints gain force from other passages in which Geiler protested against exaggerations.] "**Because one monk is a rascal, thou shalt not abuse all monks as rascals.**" [And he protested against the rising cry for disendowment]: "By no means; you must leave them their property, and see what can be done to compel them to live well and do their duty"<sup>2</sup>. [In his sermons he sometimes spoke very freely indeed. Preaching before a lay audience, he says]: "Take heed. 'And of whom' (sayest thou) 'shall I beware?' Beware, as the common proverb runs: **if thou wilt keep thine house clean, beware of monks and priests** and pigeons. First, beware of monks; take heed lest thou make a monk thy familiar friend, else shalt thou suffer loss in the fruit of conjugal chastity. These pigs of St Antony never go forth [from thine house] without bearing some fruit away. 'And how shall I know such a fellow?' If, when he cometh to thine house, he bring with him a little puny novice, scarce so big as thy fist, **who is content with an apple and sits in the corner, while the Religious himself is led all over the house by thy wife.** Then note the man's hands, if he bringeth gifts; one gift for thee, and another for thy wife, and another for the maidservant, and another for the children, and so forth. The third token is, if he give thee undue reverence, as, for example, thou art an artificer and he calleth thee *esquire* [*domicellum*], and if he call thee *sir* with especial reverence, always saying *dominus meus*, he will not forget this for thy name. When thou seest a Religious of this sort, with these tokens, then remember to sign thyself with the cross; for if he be a black one, he is the devil; if he be white, he is the devil's mother; if he be grey, he partaketh of both. As it is written in Augustine's letter to the people of Hippo, quoted [by St Thomas Aquinas] 2<sup>a</sup> 2<sup>ae</sup> q. 186, art. 10, 'Since I began to serve God, as I have hardly found better folk than

<sup>1</sup> Dacheux, *l.c.* p. 185.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 547-8; and again, pp. 141-3.

those who have profited in monasteries, so I have met with none worse than those who have fallen in monasteries.' But you say, 'This does not prove that they ought to be called devils.' Yes, most clearly; for devil is not a special, but a common name. In whatever man the devil's works are found, he should be called a devil.... Therefore, cross thyself and drive him forth; for there is no doubt that he hath such intentions toward thee, to take toll either of thy purse or of thy wife; otherwise he would not take the least interest in thee.... Secondly, beware of priests...." [on which subject Geiler speaks as frankly and as racily as on that of Religious<sup>1</sup>. Again, in his *Ship of Fools* (Turba cvii, nota 6): "O Lord my God, how falsely now do even those live who seem to be most spiritual—Parsons and monks, Béguines and Penitents<sup>2</sup>! Their study is not to work God's works, but to conceal the devil's works. Among them all is outward show, and there is no truth; nought else but dung be-snowed, or buried under snow; without is the glistening whiteness of righteousness and honesty, but within is a conscience reeking with vermin and with the stench of sin. The day shall come when the Sun of Righteousness shall melt the snow; and then shall the secrets of your hearts be revealed. And would that the filth of our sins were at least covered with the appearance of snow! and that our sin, like that of Sodom, were not published abroad without shame!" [After these direct testimonies from Geiler himself, we have no reason to doubt the startling speech recorded of him by his friend Wimpheling]: "[Geiler] did not shrink from saying publicly in the pulpit that, if he were compelled to make a choice between the two, **he would rather his sister should become a prostitute than that she should be thrust into a nunnery of lax life** or should be made abbess of a community of wanton canonesses; for a nun or abbess of this sort, however shameless and scandalous, is called 'gracious and clement lady,' and even knights bend the knee to her, and so she relies upon false honours and undeserved praise even unto death, and triumphs even to the edge of the Styx; whereas a prostitute, having always to suffer contempt and stripes and many calamities, would at last be smitten with compunction"<sup>3</sup>.

Of Georg Morgenstern we know little beyond what is told us by the title of his little book printed at Leipzig in 1501: "Sermons against the whole perverse state of the world, by the excellent and most famous Georg Morgenstern, most famous Doctor of Canon Law, who taught that science with all faithfulness in the university of Leipzig, and preached the Word of God to the people with much fruit and devotion." The preacher applies to his own day (fol. 28 a) the words of St Jerome:

"Behold, the world is filled everywhere with monks and priests;

<sup>1</sup> *Sermones de Arbore Humana*, Gruninger, 1519, col. 79 b (dnica 6a fest. Anne).

<sup>2</sup> I.e. Tertiaries of the four Orders of friars, who were mostly women, and who were bound by their Rule to a Quaker simplicity of life.

<sup>3</sup> Riegger, *Amoen.* fasc. 1, p. 104; cf. p. 101; and P. Wiskowatoff, *Jak. Wimpheling*, 1867, p. 124.

yet **holy priests and monks are so exceeding few** that scarce can one such be found in the multitude." [On the same page, he applies to his own age the Vision of Pachomius (*Vitaspatrum*, ed. Migne, vol. I, col. 262). God there revealed to Pachomius what monachism should come to "in the last days," "pleasing to the foolish multitude, and showing the habit of monks, and performing no good works," the unworthy promoted, and the worthy "afflicted with great persecutions"; so that the Saint was constrained to cry aloud, "O Almighty God, if it shall be thus, why didst thou permit these monasteries to be founded? Alas! for I have laboured idly and in vain." And in another place Morgenstern has a section]: "*Of the pride of Religious*. In the first place, they despise secular folk, thinking themselves better than they... They boast to have chosen the better part, with Mary Magdalene; but would that they would busy themselves with frequent service of God, and not **stagnate in idleness**... Those are not sons of the saints who fill the saints' places, but those who do their works" (fol. 4 a).

Olivier Maillard, a Breton, joined the Conventual Franciscans and, after some time, passed on to the stricter Order of Observants. He was three times provincial minister, court preacher to Louis XI, and patronized by Innocent VIII, Charles VIII, and Ferdinand of Castile. In 1501 the papal legate commissioned him to reform the relaxed Franciscans; his persuasions failed; the brethren gave way only under pressure from the civil authorities, and avenged themselves by driving Maillard out of the convent. According to the *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, Maillard preached once so plainly against Louis XI that "the king sent word that, if he did so again, he should be sewn in a sack and cast into the Seine. To the bearer of this threat Maillard answered (in allusion to the post-relays which the king had just instituted), 'Tell His Majesty that I shall get to Paradise by water quicker than he can travel with his post-horses.'" He died somewhere between 1502 and 1510. My translations are from his *Serm. Quad.* (Paris, 1500), serm. xxiv, fol. 42 b; and *Quadrages. Opus* (Paris, Petit, 1512), serm. xxxvi, fol. 92 b:

"I dare to say that the sin of the prelates does more harm in the Church than anything else... O prelates, beware of [giving] scandal; for layfolk say: 'If that were so grievous a sin, our prelates would not commit it. If, again, the harlot's life were ignominious and shameful, then harlots would not be invited to good companies, as weddings and banquets.'... **And you, dan Religious, what an example you give to layfolk when you go to the brothel!** I exhort you, brethren and sirs, love reformation of life. I have seen Germany and many other provinces where there are many reformed convents, and you here [in Paris] are perishing with [spiritual] hunger." "Sir citizens [of Paris], tell me... what is worse than that women, under the name of devotion, should come to church to show their flesh? **What is worse than to wear the frock of sanctity (like Religious of our day) and to keep harlots in their chambers?** This touches you, my lord Bishop, who permit the shops of the apothecaries to be opened today [*i.e.* Sunday], even as yesterday, for selling, as yesterday for trade... Unless God have mercy on you, ye will be damned."

Alexander Barclay wrote his *Ship of Fools* in 1509. It is mainly translated from Sebastian Brandt's *Narrenschiff* of a few years earlier; but sometimes Barclay adds verses of his own. This appears to be the case when he comes to speak of the monks (vol. II, pp. 322 ff.), and embroiders in detail upon Brandt's brief mention:

"Here maketh myne Autour a specyall mencion  
Of ypocrytis nat parfyte of byleue,  
And suche as abuseth theyr relygyon;  
But I shall nat so sharply them repreue;  
I am full lothe relygious men to greue  
Or discontent; for, if I so do wolde,  
**A myghty volume coude nat theyr vyces holde.**  
.

Hang up the scapler, the amys, cowle and frocke,  
Or other habyte of eche relygyon,  
Vpon a tre clene dede, or rottyn stocke,  
Suche ar those folys that have professyon,  
Leuynge theyr right rule in eche condicion;  
They bere the habyte, the vesture or the wede,  
And eke the name, without the thyng in dede;

**And if that one lyve well and vertuously**  
In way of grace, lyke as he ought to go,  
**The remanent assayle hym with enuy,**  
And hym oppres with grevous payne and wo  
Vntyll he folowe lyke as the others do,  
And leue his way of godly ryghtwysnes,  
Folowyng the lyfe full of all viciousnes.  
.

Alas! what lewde relygion do they take,  
Or of what sort is theyr professyon,  
That of theyr wombes vyle theyr goddes make,  
As wytles bestis voyde of discresson!  
Thus it appereth that **theyr ingressyon**  
**Into relygyon is more for welth and eas,**  
Than by harde penaunce, our sauour to pleas.  
.

These ar the tokyns and sygnes euydent  
Whiche in ypocrytis men may note and se;  
Also the relygious sholde be obedyent,  
And euer perseuer in fayre humylyte,  
Beynge content with wylfull pouerte,  
Enclynynge euer with all his dilygence  
His chastyte to kepe by abstynence.

But nowe hath entred into relygyon,  
In stede of mekenes and obedyence,

Pryde and disdayne, and fals rebellyon,  
 Yll wyll, enuy, and other lyke offence;  
 Wylfull pouertye expellyd haue they thence,  
 And all ar gyuen vnto worldly ryches,  
 Whiche they out-wast about vnthryftynes.

But of **theyr chastyte**, for to be playne,  
 It for to kepe is great diffyculte  
**Where glotony and dronkenes doth rayne;**  
 But where as is abstynence and scarsyte  
 It may be kept, and best contynued be;  
 The flesshe agaynst the reason doth rebell  
 But well is hym that the ardent hete may quell.

But these wretchys have moche gretter hede  
 Theyr wombe to fede tyll they be full as swyne,  
 As for theyr soule, they labour nat to fede  
 With godly wordes or holsome discyplyne;  
 The greattest part to glotony inclyne  
 Whiche is the rote of Venus insolence;  
 Now Iuge ye, where is theyr contynence?"

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1469-1533) was one of the most conspicuous figures of the Italian Renaissance; a great Platonist and a friend of Lorenzo de' Medici. The following extract is from his memorial to Leo X and the Lateran Council in 1513 (*Opera*, Bâle, 1601, p. 886).

"Among many chiefs of our religion, after whose example the ignorant multitude should have been modelled and formed, there is either **no worship of God**, or little at best, no course and system of good life, no shame or modesty; justice has lapsed either into hatred or into favour, piety is almost drowned in superstition, and men sin openly in all ranks. . . . These are the diseases and wounds which you, supreme Pontiff, have to heal; otherwise, if you (upon whom for many causes it is specially incumbent) refuse the task, then I fear lest He whose Vicar thou art upon earth may no longer use plasters, but cut off and destroy the infected members with fire and steel; indeed, I believe He hath already given tokens of this His future treatment. Were God-vowed virgins, at the [recent] plunder of Brescia, torn from their most religious temples, as a prey to the soldiery? Were priests murdered in the slaughter of Ravenna? At the sack of Prato, were maidens formerly noted for their holiness given over to prostitution? Holy Father, what else did these things give us to understand but that the consecrated houses and temples had formerly been given over to pandars and catamites, that the sheepfolds of the Good Shepherd had been handed over to wicked wolves; that, in many [*plerisque*] cities the precincts formerly dedicated to virgins had been changed into **brothels and dens of obscenity**. Yet these, I fear, are but the beginnings of evil, and a mere foretaste. . . unless we avert it by our amended manners."



Michel Menot was born about 1440 and died in 1518. He joined the Franciscans, and is said to have taught theology in the Order. He is best known through the extreme, and even excessive bluntness with which he branded the sins of his age. I have not been able to consult the recent edition of his *Sermons Choisis*, by J. Nève (Paris, 1903); but the reader will find theological interest, though not much social information, in Prof. E. Gilson's article based on this edition (*Rev. d'hist. franciscaine*, July, 1925, p. 301). The following extract is from one of his Lenten sermons, quoted in *Predicatoriana*, p. 70. Like several others of his time, Menot prints his sermons in Latin for the use of his brethren, but slips in here and there the pithy French words or phrases which will tell with the audience.

"The third beast is the boar out of the wood which hath laid waste [the Lord's vineyard; Ps. lxxix, 14, Vulg.]. These are they who, nowadays, enter into this vineyard by right of their affinity and kindred: 'This is my singular<sup>1</sup> friend, my nephew, and so forth; he must needs be provided for.' Thou providest not for the Church, but thou providest him with a benefice and with everlasting damnation. Some investigator of these ecclesiastics will perchance say, this is the one cause why there are certain Church convents and abbeys with 15,000 *livres* a year, yet *tout y chet*, all is falling into ruin; a dozen monks cannot find a livelihood there. Look at the church, the cloister, the dormitory; *c'est grant pitié*; the thing is pitiful; a crew of beggars would be ashamed to be unable to order their congregations better than this. **If it be said that they spend all this in alms, that is certainly not true**; for the superiors of such monasteries are as close and as miserly as little devils—*sicut parvi diaboli*. So it comes to this, that all these revenues pass through *troys cordelières de l'Ave-Maria*; through three phrases of the Ave Maria; to wit, *benedicta tu*, then *in mulieribus*, and thirdly *fructus ventris*. First, *benedicta tu*; that is, great pomp, great bombance, *ce sont les grandes pompes, les grandes bragues*, pomp and great luxury of dress. If he be an abbot, he must have a mule with silver-gilt bridle: 'Tell me, pontiffs, what hath gold to do with bridles?'<sup>2</sup> If he be a simple priest, why must he have *ung pourpoing de velours*, a velvet doublet? Secondly, *in mulieribus*; he must have *les donnes* by day and by night. Ho, now *n'en gerroit pas une accouchée*, but sir superior must be present. He must have ladies by day and by night; and now no childbearing woman lieth in, but sir prelate of the Church is bidden to the feast; he must hold the child at the font, and be godfather; for it is well known *qu'il a la bourse pour fournir à l'appointement*; that he has a purse full of money, whereby he can give abundant satisfaction. **That is the way that Church goods go! Know how 'he that maintaineth harlots shall squander away his substance'** (Prov. xxix, 3), both in the spiritual, the bodily, and the worldly sense. Thirdly, *fructus ventris*, *ce sont les convives et banquets*; these are feasts and luxurious

<sup>1</sup> A play upon the Vulgate words, *singularis aper*, from which comes the modern French *sanglier*.

<sup>2</sup> A quotation adapted from Persius which St Bernard had used nearly four centuries earlier in a similar connexion.

banquets. If any banquet be made in the whole city, the lord bishop or protonotary must first be bidden, as he who came almost five leagues to Paris to bless the cakes.... There are two reasons why the men who have so many and so rich benefices cannot live by them, leaving the places bare and indigent. The first is, when I go through the fields and see from afar a church tower—a *demy-couvert, une vieille église toute en ruine*—the roof half gone, an old tumbledown church, I ask some passer-by: 'Ho! friend, what is this church?' 'Father, **this is a rich abbey** with a revenue of about twenty thousand [*livres*].' 'Hé, où en est l'abbé? where is the abbot?' 'He is at court, following the king who gave him this abbey, and so he careth little for the abbey or for the starving monks.' *Je passe outre*; I go on my way; I see another church; I put the same question, and it is answered that **this is a collegiate church richly endowed** for such and such a number of canons. 'Hé? how is it not otherwise ordered? were the wars the cause of this ruin?' 'Alas, Father, no! but the lord and prelate of this church has many others; and so the revenues of this are brought to him yearly and he takes no farther account of it.' That is the second reason why he cannot live by such a heap of benefices, because one devoureth the other."

The General Chapter records of the English Austin canons, in 1518, run:

"Then the presidents and other superiors discussed in general terms how to reform **the lamentable ruin of the whole Order** that was imminent, both in head and in members, since they were running to ruin [*miserabiliter ruentibus*] both in regular observances and in temporal possessions, and were likely soon to perish; which things, indeed, seemed to befall by the vengeance of God, seeing that they despised the censures of the Church, which many of them, and almost all, are compelled to incur inevitably and almost unwillingly by reason of the various multitude of statutes which have been enjoined upon them under the said censures, and **are scarce kept in any particular**" (H. E. Salter, *Chapters of the Aug. Canons*, 1922, p. 133). The Council of Paris complained, in 1521: "**In many monasteries**... the inmates treat the life of the Rule **as though they feared to be called or considered Religious**, whether in manners, in name, or in habit"<sup>1</sup>.

The *Hundred Grievances of the German Nation* were drawn up by the emperor and his princes at the Diet of Nürnberg in 1524 and sent to the pope. I translate here from clauses nos. 8, 75 and 90 (E. Brown, *Fasc.* vol. I, 1690, pp. 355 ff.). The princes complain of the robbery of the poor by indulgence-mongers, and go on:

"Here, again, is a matter wherein the laity are oppressed by Religious, and especially the poor, who feel the pinch of want at home: namely, that the begging of the Mendicant Orders leaves no corner untouched either in country or in town; indeed, they are called Limitours from the limits within which they scour the countryside. These perambula-

<sup>1</sup> Martène-Durand, *Ampl. Coll.* vol. VIII, col. 1020.

tions are against the statutes of their Orders, and are prompted not **by necessity but by insatiable avarice**. Thence it cometh to pass that sometimes in a single town, not large but even very small, there are two or three or more convents of friars, into which all the alms are scraped together that can anywhere be gotten; meanwhile the sick or aged citizens or inhabitants, who had lived their lives honestly with their wives and children, by means of their labour and the sweat of their brow, must now lack means and perish of hunger." [They beg that the pope will put an end to this system.] "Moreover, the [ecclesiastical] officials, driven by accursed greed of gold [tolerate usury, and] suffer clerics and **Religious** and secular folk to cohabit unlawfully and publicly **with their concubines** and mistresses and other harlots of the same sort, and to beget children. How great scandal and peril and harm these two things cause to men's souls and bodies, we need not rehearse, since no man can fail to see it who is not blinder than a mole." "Nor, again, is it less grievous to the Germans that **the greater number** of parish priests and monks and other ecclesiastics mingle with the people in taverns and stables and dances, and go abroad in unbecoming attire with swords and ridiculous garments; moreover, by their quarrels and wranglings and altercations they provoke layfolk to anger, and consequently to arms, and wound them and sometimes even stab them to death. Then they vex those wretched layfolk, even those whom they have injured, with excommunication, until they make peace with them to their satisfaction."

The Dominican Guillaume Pépin preached his *Sermons on the Destruction of Nineveh* at Evreux in 1524, and dedicated them to the bishop. In this course, he criticizes *seriatim* every class and condition of French society in his day; one of his most vehement chapters is that which pleads for "the destruction of the street of the Lutherans." The following extract is from sermon XIX (ed. Paris, 1524, fol. 133 b).

"Having dealt at length, in the preceding sermon, with the destruction of the gambling-hall of the city of Nineveh, to wit, of the game of dice, which abounds with all sorts of sins and iniquities, and is followed by almost infinite evils, we must now pass on to treat of the destruction of the abbeys of the said city, by which we understand the reprobation of the life of **many Religious**, whether monks or of any other Order, who strive to **live contrary to the vows of their lips**. And, because secular folk, whether laymen or clerics, are not greatly edified by discourses on the matter of Religion—nay, rather, both they and good and devout Religious might be scandalized thereat—and, moreover, few Religious are wont to attend at sermons to the people, both because of their claustral enclosure and their religious occupations and for the avoidance of distractions, therefore we will expatiate, as God shall grant to us, upon this matter of Religion, so that it may be profitable to the common help and may afford matter for our readers. . . .

"The first extrinsic cause of the said destruction may be called a *lay* cause. For, nowadays, **many Religious live irreligiously**, more

especially if they are possessioners, with settled revenues; so that, as the vulgar proverb runs, there is none of the first cloth left in many abbeys and conventual priories; by which is meant, that both the vows and the statutes and the holy ceremonies are weakened and almost wholly extinguished, abolished and buried in the said houses and monasteries. For **divine service is ill celebrated** there, so that the monks' chanting is as the descant of howling or barking dogs. The monastery gates are opened wide from dawn to dark, not only to men but **also to women** of all ages. Their community of goods consists perchance herein, that each seizes whatsoever he can. They obey just so far as they please; instead of silence there is murmuring; instead of meditation, the kitchen or the tavern; instead of reading and honest exercise, dicing or hand-tennis; for fasting and abstinence they have **surfeit and drunkenness**; for hair-cloth upon their flesh, soft and delicate shirts; and so is it with almost innumerable abuses and breaches of discipline in many monasteries. But whence cometh this? certainly it cometh mainly from an extrinsic and lay cause, since in these days many princes are wont to interfere with promotions to abbacies, which they commonly confer upon secular clerics, as to **young children** of nobles or captains, who perchance are not yet tonsured, and who **become abbots or priors** before they are monks<sup>1</sup>. And, albeit the monastic revenues are great, yet, after providing but moderately or scantily for the monks, the rest goes to these [boys'] parents, who spend all upon themselves except the little which they grant to maintain these their children in the schools. Then, when the boys are grown up to man's estate, they become hangers-on at princes' courts in order to come to some bishopric, caring naught for the monks or the conventual buildings, but only for extorting money. Sometimes, again, the princes put a monk into these abbeys, provided that he be of noble race, without regard for goodness of life or profit to the monastery; such men care not for morals, but rather for hounds and hawks and things hidden behind these. Oftentimes their friends and kinsfolk come to visit these men, and many other noble folk of both sexes, living there after their own fashion—*ibi vitam talem qualem ducentes*—and consuming the substance of the abbey. Now the primary cause of all these evils is extrinsic, to wit, the prince who provideth the monasteries with such heads. Yet in truth he provideth not for the monasteries but for these undeserving persons, to his

<sup>1</sup> For this, the so-called "commendam" system, popes were even more responsible than princes; see Imbart de la Tour's *Origines de la Réforme*, vol. II, pp. 149, 292, 492, 502, 504, and the contemporary complaints there quoted: e.g. "La principale cause du désordre... vient de ce que nostre saint-père le pape... commende indifféremment les monastères et églises réguliers aux clers séculiers"; "Tout le désordre est causé par ses dispenses et commendes." In England, the system had only just begun a few years before the Dissolution: English kings, fortunately, found their own profit in resisting a system which foreign princes and popes found it most profitable to encourage.

own future damnation and to that of the persons whom he thus provideth....

"The second extrinsic cause is *ecclesiastical*. For **certain abbeys are exempt** from the jurisdiction of the ordinaries and immediately subject to the Roman Church, while others are subject to the ordinaries. But, whether with this sort or with that, it is clear and evident that the prime cause of misrule in many abbeys proceedeth from an extrinsic ecclesiastical cause, at least permissively. For the first sort are **seldom or never visited**; so that they who rule there do as they will. The second sort are yearly visited, not by the ordinaries in person but by commissaries, who commonly seek to win **not souls but money**, even though this be forbidden in canon law.... But what do our bishops nowadays? Certainly they commit to their vicars and officials the care of visiting the abbeys and priories under their jurisdiction; and these men, after visiting very superficially and hurriedly, having dined excellently and taken the customary fees, say farewell until next year. They enquire not, therefore, into the life and morals of the monks, whether they live in common without private property, whether they live chastely and cleanly, whether divine service be duly performed, and so forth. Hence it cometh that **the monks sin more carelessly and more boldly**, so that they go down unto hell with those who should have visited them....

"The second cause is intrinsic; and this, again, may be divided into two. The first intrinsic cause is essential or principal; and this, again, is threefold, according to the triple division of the essential vows<sup>1</sup>, which are promiscuously broken and violated in many unreformed monasteries.

"The first intrinsic and essential cause of the destruction of the said abbeys is the transgression of the vow of obedience....

"The second intrinsic and essential cause is the transgression of **the vow of continence**, which vow is **very ill kept in many abbeys both of monks and of nuns**, and also in the abbeys and monasteries of other Religious, so that they deserve to be utterly destroyed by reason of the abominations and horrible crimes committed by those that dwell therein<sup>2</sup>. [Pépin here expatiates at length on the good and the bad side of matrimony, and decides that virginity is, on the whole, a higher state. Moreover, once vowed, it can never lawfully be broken; not even a pope can dispense here.] As it is written in canon law (*Decret. Greg. lib. III, tit. xxxv, c. 6*; decree of Innocent III): '*The abdication of property, and the maintenance of chastity, are so bound up with the monastic Rule that not even the Supreme Pontiff can grant a dispensation in either case.*'... But, alas! many of them keep neither

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* the *tria substantialia*, from which not even a pope could absolve the man who had once taken them—Obedience, Chastity and Poverty.

<sup>2</sup> "Quod pessime observatur in plerisque abbatiis tam monachorum quam monialium, quam etiam in abbatiis et monasteriis aliorum religiosorum, ita ut mereantur funditus everti propter abominabiles et horrenda scelera que ibidem fiunt ab inhabitatoribus."

[chastity of mind nor of body]. Such is the practice in unreformed monasteries, whether of men or of women, that **they differ little from small brothels**<sup>1</sup>. [Yet St Thomas Aquinas proves by argument and illustration that, whereas a pope can dispense with a priest and allow him to marry, yet not even he can grant a dispensation to a monk], although certain ignorant lawyers say the contrary. Fifthly, this is proved by the case of the son of the king of Aragon who entered into Religion; of whom it is written that, his father and all his kinsfolk being dead, the pope gave him a dispensation to quit his convent and marry for the profit of his kingdom. This he did, and begat an heir, and returned to his cloister, leaving the kingdom to his son; for he was in continual scruple of conscience for this violation of his chastity. And, whereas we have said that the pope had given him a dispensation, it may be that herein he had exceeded his power; for it is not unbecoming to say that a pope may err in matters of fact<sup>2</sup>. . . . It is plain, therefore, that it befits ecclesiastics and Religious to live chastely. But, alas! **few nowadays can be found among them who duly maintain their chastity**; so that Jerome saith, in the 85th epistle of his third book, 'Alas, what shall I say? Oftentimes a man saith much from the great abundance of his sadness: behold! the world swarms everywhere with priests and monks, yet [true] priests and monks are so few that scarce one can be found in a hundred.' This perchance he saith for the fewness of those who keep due chastity. And thus it is proved of continence in its most special sense, which is that of Religious and clerks in Holy Orders; and, consequently, it has been proved of the second intrinsic and essential cause of the destruction of the abbeys of the city of Nineveh, that this is the transgression of the vow of chastity.

"The third intrinsic and essential cause is the transgression of the vow of poverty. For there are many [*pleraque*] monastics of divers Orders, both men's and women's, wherein **the vow of poverty is in no wise** [*minime*] **kept**, but almost all [the inmates] are proprietary, both in effect and in intention, and consequently in the way of damnation. . . . Those Religious who wish and desire to be richer in the cloister than they could have been in the world are foully deceived; for such folk are not following the poor Christ to heaven, but rather the gluttonous Dives to hell. . . . Usurers who give their money to the bank are wont to receive more than they gave. So also shall good Religious, who for God's sake give up all their worldly goods, renouncing them in particular by the vow of poverty, receive much more in the future when they come to heaven [Matt. xix, 29]. O marvellous usury! for other usurers commonly give a hundred, to receive ten; but He giveth a hundred in the next world for one given in this; and, in addition, [the lender] receives a far greater gift, to wit, life ever-

<sup>1</sup> "Practica de monasteriis tam virorum quam mulierum non reformatis quod parum differunt a parvis prostibulis."

<sup>2</sup> "In iis enim que sunt facti, non est inconveniens dicere papam posse errare."

lasting. [Luke xix, 23, is a type of the good Religious; our Lord praises such usury and rebukes by implication all proprietary monks.] And by consequence it is manifest, concerning the three Religious vows—obedience, chastity, and voluntary poverty—that, because these are ill kept in the abbeys of the city of Nineveh; therefore **they are destined deservedly to be overthrown and destroyed.**...

“For claustral life is like unto a ship, wherein the smallest defect (for example in caulking or in nails or in wax or in things of that sort) slowly admits the water; and at length it sinks to the bottom.... Thus, if the ceremonies of Religion be abolished and cease, forthwith the vows themselves perish, and the whole of Religion. Therefore let no man henceforth enquire, saying, ‘Whereunto do claustral ceremonies profit us? it is enough to keep the [three] vows.’ Certainly, in my opinion, it is more than impossible (save for some new miracle) to keep the vows of Religion without keeping the ceremonies. And, because in the abbeys of Nineveh these ceremonies are neglected, and perhaps scorned, and because the neglect of such ceremonies leads easily to neglect and transgression of the essential vows themselves, therefore it is right that the aforesaid abbeys of Nineveh should be overthrown.”

In this sermon, as in all others of this series, Pépin concludes by describing the method of attack under military metaphors; he will batter down this devil’s fortress by bringing up all his artillery, heavy and medium and light. These he will bring up, each in its order, before the three main gates, viz. of Disobedience, of Incontinence, and of Private Property. Here, as elsewhere, his heavy guns are quotations from the Bible; *e.g.* he batters Disobedience with 1 Sam. xv, 23, “Because it is as the sin of witchcraft to rebel, like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey.” His next guns are quotations from canon law; the light artillery consists in other sentences from the Fathers. Against incontinence he quotes Ecclesiasticus xxvi, 20, *Vulg.*, “No price is worthy of a continent soul,” etc.

“The second bombard, of middling size, which we must set up against the Gate of Incontinence is from canon law<sup>1</sup>. It was decreed at the Council of Tribur that monks or nuns who lived incontinently should be separated from the community and shut up in prison, there to weep for their offences; and that, if the monastery itself had no strong and secure prisons, they must be sent and shut up in some other monastery. And this penalty of prison decreed against Religious is perpetual in the case of many Religions, especially if the culprit be not rescued by benevolence of the Holy See or the authority of his superiors. Certainly this bombard ought to be most terrible to the Religious dwelling in the abbeys of Nineveh. [The light artillery is drawn from Jerome’s stories of the Vestal Virgins and other pagan devotees.] Therefore these light bombards ought certainly to overthrow the monks and nuns and other impure Religious of the abbeys of Nineveh, together with their habitations; even if not [literally], with regard to

<sup>1</sup> I here omit his technical references without farther note.

the buildings, at least in so far as their most damnable manners are concerned, full of all filth and putrefaction."

After an equally formal bombardment of the Gate of Property, Pépin calls upon the garrison to surrender:

"Ye therefore, irreligious Religious, outwardly but not inwardly monks, who abhor even the name of regular and reformed life, ye have heard, in terms more diffuse and prolix than we had intended, how perilously ye live, seeing that ye neither render the vows which your lips have vowed unto the Lord, nor do ye give honour and reverence to the ceremonies of the Rule. If our artillery, great and mean and small, touches your gates whereby ye enter not into heaven but into hell, would that it may shake and altogether overthrow them; I speak of your evil manners and transgressions of vows from your heart's core. But I will not give you room to resist the truth, as I permitted other sinners in my other sermons<sup>1</sup>, for I know that ye have an evil cause; moreover, we for our part might easily weary our kindly hearers. Wherefore, to conclude this present sermon, I beseech you, by the bowels of mercy of our God, to consider the vocation wherewith ye are called, and whereof ye shall make account, willing or unwilling, when ye shall stand one day before the judgement-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Pépin devotes his 40th and last sermon to "the destruction of Apostate-Street in the city of Nineveh." That street, he says, has "a multitude" of inmates, though not all are apostates from Religious Orders; there are others, like Julian the Apostate, to whom the word is applied in a more general sense. But many also are Religious; and for many of these cases there are obvious reasons:

"Vows are made with the aim of pleasing God... And this tells against many nobles, who, finding themselves burdened with a multitude of children, and unable to make worldly provision for all, **send some while they are yet children into Religion**. When these are come to the age of profession, they are perchance moved by the shame of returning to the world, or certainly guided by fear of their parents, who say that they will never give them help if they return to the world; therefore they do indeed profess Religion with their lips, but not heartily or willingly. Whence it cometh that **these rarely come to good in Religion**; but they either apostatize or end by leading impure and irreligious lives; or at least they importune the Court of Rome, especially if they be of the male sex, for permission to change their state, even to the extent of becoming secular priests and living in secular fashion, alleging in excuse for their sins that, when they took Religious vows, they scarce knew what they did. Moreover, as aforesaid, they allege also the fear of their parents. But, granted the truth of that which they say, if they have yet remained for any notable time in the said Religion after [their profession], without protesting against it,

<sup>1</sup> After most of his sermons, Pépin had allowed discussion of all his points.



then there is a presumption of sufficient consent to the obligation of Religion. For to bear willingly the habit of Religion, and to live for several years with Religious, doing the things pertaining to Religion, are tokens of inward consent. Therefore such men, when they petition for dispensations and say that they never consented to Religion, give the pope to understand falsely. For this reason the pope is accustomed to add to their dispensation the words *Laying upon your conscience the burden [that your words are true]*. Wherefore such folk should beware lest the papal dispensation be turned to the ruin of their salvation....

"From all this we conclude that vows are lawful; and, again, that it is better to do a thing under vow than without vow. And, seeing the men of Nineveh do ill observe the vows which their lips have made, violating them promiscuously (as is plain in many Religious and clerics in the matter of the vow of continence, and again with many laymen and laywomen with their vows of pilgrimage and fasts and abstinences and alms and prayers and so forth), therefore that street in Nineveh wherein such folk dwell doth deserve to be destroyed; and thus follows the proof of our first main point.

"The second main point is: How can this street be destroyed? In this fashion; we must lay a multitude of bombards against it, in order to overthrow and destroy it utterly, if possible."

[Here he brings up his three classes of artillery, where, among the middle-sized bombards, we may note:] "Behold, therefore, ye Ninevites, in what state ye are...when ye say that vows are vain. For ye should know that your great father Luther hath lately been cast forth from the Church for this very cause, and is numbered with the heretics." [Then, after his own volleys, he follows his usual practice of noting the counterstrokes of the enemy's guns. They retort that a man who, without vowing it, lives in self-denial, chastity and poverty is better than another who "doth all under vow, and is consequently compelled thus to act, nor can he without guilt withdraw therefrom, a thing which is sometimes burdensome and grievous to him; so that he sometimes repents of his vow and says that, if it were to do again, he would never vow, as many Religious are wont to say." Pépin's reply will not seem conclusive to most modern readers; it rests mainly upon the most disputable premisses; and to this last sentence he can only answer: "Although the necessity of compulsion may cause sadness, in so far as it is contrary to the will, according to Aristotle, yet the necessity of a vow, and especially in those who are well disposed, in so far as it confirms the will in good, causes not sadness but rather joy."]

Even more significant, perhaps, are the frequent references to Religious in Pépin's other volume of sermons, preached at Évreux a few years after the Dissolution in England (1545).

"The fact is that, nowadays, **evil Religious or clergy hate the good, and persecute them** however they can, because their manners are not the manners of the rest" (fol. 22 a). "For this vice [of lechery]

the Lord is wroth with almost all Christendom, as we may see with our own eyes in the case of nobles and commoners, of clergy and Religious and many prelates who suffer from the loathsome disease which consumeth flesh and bones, and which men on this side of the Alps call the Neapolitan sickness" (fol. 29 c)<sup>1</sup>. "Many princes of today, as if in scorn of God, create many bishops and abbots, and so do bishops create many parsons blind in knowledge and lame in virtue; men who know naught and are worth naught" (fol. 49 a). "But, alas! many stick yet in the said slough [of worldly abundance], such as proprietary Religious who abhor the words *reform* and *common life*" (fol. 57 a). Among those who "quickly draw back from the way to heaven and enter upon the way to hell" are "many newly converted to Religion" (fol. 67 c). "Oftentimes men who are poor in the world procure ordination or seek to enter Religion in order that they may henceforth be able to sustain their wretched life" (fol. 78 d). "Many unbelievers refuse to be Christians, excusing themselves by reason of bad Christians. . . in which connexion we must note that unbelievers are more scandalized by the evil lives of ecclesiastics and Religious than by any others, even as, on the contrary, they are specially edified by their good lives" (fols. 85 a, b). "**Alas! how many ravening wolves of hypocrisy are there in Christ's Church among clergy and Religious!**" (fol. 92 c). "There are many priests, yet few [real] priests; many in name, few in deed; and we must pass the like judgement on other estates; we may apply this to Religious, to kings and nobles," etc. (fol. 113 b). Few abbots really live in their monasteries (fol. 113 c). "There are many, both in the cloister and in the world, who neither have peace in themselves nor suffer it in others; men who are properly called troublers of peace" (fol. 137 a). "Indeed, modern pastors know well how to feed themselves, but not their flocks; hence we may see many parsons and priors and abbots and so forth so fat that they are ready to burst their skins"—*ut vix possint contineri intra pellem suam* (fol. 143 c). "As Isaiah saith (i, 5), *The whole head is sick* (as to prelates and princes and rulers of the people) *and the whole heart is sad* (as to clerics and Religious, who ought to be the heart of the Church); *from the sole of the foot* (as to inferiors and subjects) *unto the top of the head* (that is, unto the Apostolic See), *there is no soundness therein* (that is, in the Mystic Body). So widely hath the leprosy of sin spread" (fol. 153 a). **The Pharisees** envied and opposed Christ more than other Jews, because "they, like many clerics and Religious, were covetous of honour and worldly glory, seeing that they lived outwardly an austere and religious life" (fol. 183 c). "Note how hypocrites and false clergy and Religious seem to be in a certain sense imitators of them [the Pharisees], and therefore reprehensible" (fol. 193 d).

In 1527, three years later than this anti-Lutheran Pépin preached and printed his *Destruction of Nineveh*, Cornelius Agrippa published his booklet

<sup>1</sup> Pépin recurs to this subject of syphilis again and again; fols. 75 a, b (where he specifies a bishop whom he had known); fol. 147 d; fol. 230 b.

*On the Uncertainty and Vanity of all Sciences and Arts.* This wayward but distinguished scientist, though suspected of Lutheran tendencies, says little or no more against the monks than his unimpeachably orthodox predecessors and contemporaries said. And he ends on what most modern readers would feel to be a moderate and fundamentally true note (ch. 62 *ad fin.*).

"There are many other faults which may be urged against them; but others before me have preached with very ample vigour of blame on these points, so that they have exposed to scorn not only many really religious fathers, men of honest and upright life, but also even the institutes and rules of good life framed by the holy Fathers. Therefore I wish to say nothing here to the disadvantage of those who, walking uprightly under their vows, and following in the steps of the holy Fathers, are aspiring to the height of perfection. I confess that their Rules and professions are holy; I confess that **there are to the present day holy monks, holy friars, holy hermits, holy canons regular; yet among these are very many** [*plurimos*] **faithless, reprobate and apostate**, by whom the profession of Religion is disgraced." [He recognizes that nobody can be perfect, not even the Apostles, and that there are times and places where abuses are almost inevitable], "since the common error maketh law. When this prevails, I think that the Church is then compelled to wink at many things which the rigour of religion would not otherwise have borne; so that nothing unsullied, stable and perpetual can be found even in the Religious."

Erasmus's letter to Lambert Grunnius is translated in Froude's *Life and Letters of Erasmus* (lect. ix, p. 179), and therefore it need not be fully reproduced here. I will only quote a few sentences to justify my text in Chapter xxvii, and pass on to another less-known passage from Erasmus's writings.

"There are monasteries where there is no discipline, and which are **worse than brothels**. . . . A monk may be drunk every day. He may go with loose women secretly and openly. He may waste the Church's money on vicious pleasures. He may be a quack or a charlatan, and all the while be an excellent brother and fit to be made abbot. . . . **Monks of abandoned lives notoriously swarm over Christendom**. . . . Is it not wicked, then, my friend, to entangle young men by false representations in such an abominable net?"

Erasmus had himself thus suffered; and it is natural that he should also disapprove strongly of the law which ruled that a monastic vow dissolved a marriage previously contracted. It is a hard rule, he says,

"and has a still harder appearance in these days, **if you consider what is the modern discipline in many** [*plerisque*] **monasteries and nunneries, and how few of the inmates live a truly monastic life**. . . . Nowadays, in my opinion, parents ought to have this right [of reclaiming children who had gone into monasteries without leave] up to their 25th year. There would perhaps be fewer monks, but those would be purer"<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Christ. Mat. Instit.* (Opp. ed. Le Clerc, vol. v, 1704, p. 647).

Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester and founder of Corpus Christi College at Oxford, wrote in 1527 to hail Wolsey as a strong man bent upon reform.

"I have myself, during almost all of the past three years, been setting myself diligently to that one task, and have concentrated almost all my thoughts, labours, vigils and energies upon that single point. There I discovered and observed, what at first I should not have thought, how all things concerned with the ancient purity of the clergy, **and especially of monasticism, had been so depraved by licences and corruptions, or so destroyed and corrupted by the wickedness of the ages and by lapse of time**, that, though this increased my will, yet it wholly destroyed my hope, at my present advanced age, of ever seeing a perfect and complete reformation even in this, my own peculiar diocese."

Christopher St Germain wrote his *Division between the Spiritualitie and Temporalitie* in 1531. In his 15th chapter, after quoting the *Imitatio Christi* in its description of the holiness of early monasticism, he continues:

"But the more pity is, **most men say**, that nowadays many Religious men will rather follow their own will than the will of their superior, and that they will neither have hunger nor thirst, heat nor cold, nakedness, weariness nor labour, but riches, honour, dignities, friends and worldly acquaintance, attendance of servants at their commandments, pleasures and disports, and that more liberally than temporal men have. **Thus are they fallen (say they) from the true Religion**, whereby the devotion of the people is in a manner fallen from them. Nevertheless **I doubt not but there be many right good and virtuous Religious persons**, God forbid it should be otherwise; **but it is said that there be many evil, and that in such multitude that they that be good cannot or will not see them reformed**. And one great cause that letteth reformation in this behalf is this: If the most dissolute person in all the community, and that liveth most openly against the rules of Religion, can use this policy, to extol his Religion above other, and dispraise other Religious, for that they be not of such perfection as their Religion is, anon he shall be called a good fervent brother and one that beareth up Religion, and shall be therefore the more lightly forborne in his offences." There are few, he says, who are above extolling the bad Religious who extol their own religion: "and truly that is a great default, for it giveth a great boldness to offenders and **discourageth them that be good**, when they see them that most live against their Religion be so maintained and commanded." Again, people are scandalized by contests about elections of abbots, etc.: "and so hath charity waxed cold between them."

Hermann, count of Wied, became archbishop of Cologne in 1515. He was prominent against Luther at the Diet of Worms (1521), consented to the burning of two protestants in his diocese, and was still willing to take violent measures against the Reformation in 1532. In 1536 he summoned a Provincial Council, to combat Lutheranism by reasonable measures of reform. Thenceforward he drifted farther from the papal party; the pope

deposed him in 1546; the emperor reluctantly ratified this; Hermann, to avoid civil war, retired to his own castle of Wied, where he died in 1552. His articles of 1536 long remained a standard work; I translate from the Venice edition of 1641, fol. 55 a (section x, c. 9).

"Monasteries in old days were schools of virtue and hospitals for the poor; now, alas! we see the men's houses transformed from virtuous schools to inns for soldiers and robbers, and the women's, in many places, changed into **houses suspected** (that we may use no harsher word) **of incontinence**." [Parents must be told not to thrust unwilling children into monasteries, especially in the case of girls, "by reason of the frailty of their sex."]

I subjoin, by way of postscript, four testimonies from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to show that the problem of monastic reform was not less urgent after than before the Reformation.

In 1562, a committee of orthodox German churchmen was chosen by the emperor Ferdinand I to draw up a list of propositions for reform which he presented to the Council of Trent<sup>1</sup>. The abuses on which these men laid stress are not spoken of as new; on the contrary, it is insisted over and over again that they were the main causes of the heretics' success when Luther came forward, and in one case a definite time is mentioned, "For the last 60 years" (p. 565). After bewailing the "enormous degeneracy" of "the whole clergy," the memorialists proceed:

"No less hath the monastic state, of both sexes, degenerated most grievously from its own institutions. Whereas, of old, Prelates and Regulars were busied in prayer, meditation, and labour, and lived in humility and frugality, spending all that exceeded their own necessities upon the poor and the education of studious boys in order that these might some day be profitable to the Church of Christ, what, on the other hand, is done now? They take no heed of divine service, they observe no discipline of Regular life. Their superiors, for a great part, do indeed profess the Catholic Church with their lips, yet at heart they have embraced heresies. They pilfer the monastic goods; they devastate their monasteries; they care not to have full conventual numbers under them; and such as they have they treat so that [these monks] either become like unto their abbots in all sorts of vices, or, if that displease them, **they are compelled to run away**, casting off the habit of Religion and unmindful of their profession, whence follows not infrequently the full crime of apostasy. Hence, again, we see this consequence also, that in monasteries that were once even most opulent, **you may now find scarce one or two monks** who, by reason of the fewness of their brethren or their own rude ignorance, can suffice to perform divine service. Such, often [*plerumque*] are those heads of houses who boast of their exemption from episcopal

<sup>1</sup> Schellhorn, vol. 1, pp. 490 ff., esp. § 15; Le Plat, *Mon. Conc. Trid.* vol. v, pp. 244 ff. For the Council's neglect of this memorial, see Sarpi, lib. vi, § 28 (tr. Brent, 1676, p. 480).

jurisdiction. Such men, indeed, do nourish, instead of conventual monks, a numerous household of useless servitors and horses, rather for pomp and vainglory than for necessity; and they make many idle and vain expenses, squandering all either on that **excessive luxury** wherein they indulge or to the private profit of their own friends, not (as they ought) to the public profit of the monasteries. Since these things are too true to be concealed by any artifice whatsoever, we leave it to the Holy Council to consider whether there be any means whereby the monastic Order can be either brought back to its original institution, or **relaxed to milder rules**; so that some other lawful means and methods be provided whereby all these monastic possessions and riches be no longer so wickedly wasted, but be deputed and converted to other uses, no less pious and profitable to God's Church."

The following is from a letter on behalf of Mary Queen of Scots to Paul IV in 1556. It is printed by Fr J. H. Pollen in his volume of *Papal Negotiations with Queen Mary* (1901), p. 528.

"Moreover on behalf of the said queen it had been declared how **all nunneries of every kind of religious women**, and especially those of the Cistercian Order, abbesses, prioresses and sisters included, have come to such a pass of boldness, that they utterly **contemn the safeguards of chastity**. [For] not only do they wander outside the monastic enclosures in shameless fashion through the houses of seculars, but they even admit all sorts of worthless and wicked men within their convents and hold with them unchaste intercourse. [Thus] **they defile the sacred precincts with the birth of children**, and bring up their progeny about them, go forth abroad surrounded by their numerous sons, and give their daughters in marriage dowered with the ample revenues of the Church. For this scandal there is no possible hope of a remedy except it be applied by your Holiness, as **they allege their exemptions and will consent to no admonition or visitation of the ordinaries**. [5] Your Holiness is therefore prayed to appoint certain prelates for their visitation, correction, punishment and reform. Moreover, seeing that the over-great revenues of the monks seem to be the cause of this unbridled licence, an account of their incomes should be taken, and, when a portion suitable for them has been set aside, the surplus should be applied to the restoration of churches and other buildings, which are falling to decay, as also to the enclosure of such religious houses. In a word, let them do everything which may seem to be necessary in the aforesaid circumstances, and let prelates also be enjoined under the severest penalties to accept the said commission. [6] Moreover it was declared, how for about forty years various prelates and other ecclesiastical persons have alienated (usually in favour of the more powerful nobles) a great quantity of immovable goods of notable value belonging to churches, monasteries and ecclesiastical benefices, of royal foundation though held by them; [and all this they have done] without any reckoning of the loss or gain to the said churches, without observing the forms of

law, to the most grievous detriment of those churches and to the prejudice of the reigning sovereign and of the founders."

The papal Nuncio Felician Ninguarda reported as follows concerning the German monasteries in 1577. They had, of course, been influenced by their proximity to non-Catholic districts; but it would seem rash to plead that all non-Catholic elements must needs be eliminated from a state before its monasteries can become efficient.

"Certain abbots of the Cistercian Order, whose General is ordinarily a Frenchman, live so licentiously in every respect, especially in the dominions of the most serene Archduke Charles [of Austria], that they are not even ashamed to **keep concubines publicly** and to maintain them like wives of noble birth. We ought to consult [seriously] on this point." He found that there was scarcely a single nunnery which kept the rule of claustration; as to the friars, "there are some monasteries into which a single brother is put, and called prior, without other companions; and he keeps a woman under name of 'cook,' **and God knows how things go!** And under this plea the other monasteries, in which are more brethren, do the like"<sup>1</sup>.

The French monasteries of the seventeenth century were profoundly decayed; even Richelieu found himself baffled by the breadth and depth of the evil; see P. Denis, *Le Cardinal de R. et la réforme des monastères bénédictins*, 1913, pp. 117, 132, 166, 168, 217, 312, 374, 378.

FARTHER REFERENCES (implications rather than assertions): *Colton's Visitations of Derry* (*Irish Archaeol. Soc.* 1850), p. 57; *Lanercost Chron.* p. 116; Twinger v. Königshoven, *Chronik*, ed. Schilter, 1698, p. 1130, § 8; Gerson, *Opp.* vol. III, p. 844 ("fratres collapsos omnino a regulis patrum...monasteria mulierum collapsa"); Dugdale-Caley, vol. III, p. 629, vol. IV, p. 218; Dorlandus, pp. 394, 401, 407 ff., 455; Ailred of Rievaulx, *De Vit. Erem.* cc. iv, x (P.L. vol. 32, coll. 1451, 1454); *Hist. MSS. Commission Report*, IV (1874), appendix, p. 184; L. Richard, *Analysis Conciliorum*, vol. II (1778), pp. 27, 37, 42, 57, 58, 167, 217 (2), 237, 244, 245, 249, 266, 269, 270, 355, 419, 471, 474; vol. III, pp. 95, 204, 258, 311, 323, 380; Gower, *Vox Clam.* lib. III, vv. 375 ff.; *Mirour*, 8,641; 9,132; 21,073; 21,229; 21,240; 21,337; 21,757; Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. I, p. 591, § 33; Erasmus, *De contemptu mundi*, last chapter (ed. Le Clerc, vol. v, p. 1262); A.L.K.G. vol. II, pp. 111, 278; III, 590, 596; IV, 49, note (all referring to Franciscan decay); *Rev. Historique*, vol. L, 1892, p. 286 (a Franciscan of 1280); *Gallia Christiana*, vol. X, 1751, col. 386; v. d. Hardt, *Mag. Oecum. Const. Concilium*, vol. I, pars v, col. 169; pars VII, col. 287; F. X. Remling, *Gesch. d. Bischöfe v. Speyer*, vol. II, pp. 151, 187; *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey*, R.S. vol. III, p. 66 ("monachi quamplures...in adulterinis, fornicariis et incestuosis amplexibus...testes gradientes plurimos

<sup>1</sup> *Quellen u. Urkunden d. preuss. Akad. in Rom*, vol. I, pp. 194, 197, 204; cf. pp. 191-3, 199.

super terram"); *Bib. Clun.* 1614, col. 1613 (continual irregularities in the Cluniac priories, A.D. 1458); J. J. Hottinger, *Helvetische Kirchengeschichte*, vol. II, 1708, p. 857 (the Zürich town council, in 1495, "sent to the three convents to remonstrate with them for their unchaste manners and their frequentation of nunneries and other parts of the town; otherwise they should be banished from the town, whether they were superiors or ordinary Religious").

## 37

(Chapter XXVII, p. 412)

## WOMEN IN THE MONASTERIES

The following notes are supplementary to what has been said (vol. I, pp. 398 ff., 424 ff.) in tracing the history of the Cistercians.

The case of Durham is sometimes quoted as typical: *e.g.* "That the monastery was in an excellent state of discipline may be judged from a letter of the visitor Layton, written the 26th January, 1536 (*Calendar*, x, no. 183). 'Your injunctions,' he says [to Thomas Cromwell], 'can have no effect in Durham Abbey in some things; for there was never yet woman in the abbey further than the church, nor they (the monks) never come within the town'"<sup>1</sup>. That this is not literally true, we know from the monks' own account-rolls. In 1312, considerable numbers of women were employed to bring up water to the monks from the weir, while the conduit was being repaired (Surtees Soc. 1898, vol. I, p. 9). Again, in 1536 there were two washerwomen on the staff, one for the napery of the lord prior and another for that of the refectory. Several other washerwomen at Durham, in this sixteenth century, will be found recorded among my references a little farther on; but meanwhile it is important to note that this great monastery did enjoy a remarkable and exceptional immunity from lady-visitors. This was, in fact, one of those cases in which the local saint was sometimes reckoned so jealous and so vengeful that it was as much as a woman's life was worth to intrude upon his precincts. Of this the chronicler Graystones gives us a vivid illustration<sup>2</sup>. "In the year of grace 1333, on the Thursday in Easter week, the king came to Durham and lodged in the prior's chamber. On the Wednesday following Queen Philippa came for one day from Knaresborough to Durham, and, not knowing the custom of Durham monastery, she came through the abbey gate and dismounted at the prior's lodging and supped with the king. And when, after supper, she had gone to bed, it was intimated to the king by one of the monks that St Cuthbert loved not the presence of women. Wherefore the queen rose at the king's command, and, clad in her bare shift with a cloak thrown over it,

<sup>1</sup> F. A. Gasquet, *Henry VIII, etc.*, vol. I, 2nd ed. p. xviii, note.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. Dunelm. Scriptt. Tres*, Surtees Soc. 1839, p. 117.



she returned through the gate whereby she had entered, and so made her way to the castle by the Likyate, beseeching the Saint not to take vengeance for her unwitting offence." Queen Margaret had been equally unlucky at an earlier date, 1091: "There was a church in honour of [St Laurence] in Scotland, from which the female sex were rejected; when Queen Margaret of Scotland attempted to enter it with her offerings, she is said to have been suddenly smitten and repelled, but restored [to health] at the prayers of the clergy" (Mabillon, *Ann. Ben.* tom. v, p. 269). About this same time, a great English house was equally strict. Gunter of Caen, archdeacon of Salisbury, took the cowl and became the first abbot of Thorney in the diocese of Ely. "After Gunter, Robert of Prunières became abbot, and governed the monastery strenuously for twenty years. Thorney in the English tongue signifies *Isle of Thorns*, for groves of divers trees are there washed on all sides by a wide stretch of waters; . . . the monastery is far removed from all dwellings of men. The monks and their servants live alone in the thick forest shades; and here, in all safety, they fight faithfully for God. No woman cometh to this island, but for the sake of prayer; nor is any woman suffered to abide there for any occasion whatsoever; but the monks have taken care that all dwellings of women shall be at least nine miles distant" (Ordericus Vitalis, lib. xi, c. 17 (P.L. vol. 188, col. 837)). Upon this Mabillon comments (*Annales Benedictini*, tom. v, 1740, p. 489), "Would that this zeal for solitude and for separation from the company of women were equally fixed in our minds and in those of posterity! for, alas! all this is turned rather to the contrary in these times of ours." St Odo of Cluny, in the tenth century, had forbidden all access of women to that great monastery, even into the church; and, here again, Mabillon notes how this had been the original rule in all Benedictine houses (P.L. vol. 133, col. 59; AA.SS.O.S.B. vol. v, p. 163). The consort of the Emperor Henry IV was turned away from Monte Cassino in 1083; but here political motives were probably very strong (Mabillon, *Ann. Ben.* tom. v, p. 186). In later times, bishops tried to reintroduce the strictness of earlier ages: Robert de Courçon, bishop of Paris and papal legate, enacted in the Council of Paris (1212 or 1214), "Let no young girls or suspected women be received within the precincts of monasteries, unless they have separate dwellings remote from the men; if [the monks] break this rule, let them be compelled [to obedience] by the diocesan bishops" (Mansi, *Concilia*, vol. xxii, col. 914, § 45). And, here and there, a single monastery kept the old traditions as strictly as Durham. Pépin, about 1500, cites a bright example: "Here is a token how the Lord is displeased that women should come into the houses of clerics, and especially of Religious. If any woman presume to enter the monastery of St-Fiacre in the diocese of Meaux (except into the church), she is forthwith seized with an evil spirit" (*Sermones*, fol. 144 a). But, long before this time, the rule had fallen into general abeyance; great folk, especially, came with their attendants of both sexes, and disciplinarians were now mainly concerned with regulating what they found them-

selves powerless to prevent altogether. There is a significant passage in Dom Benoit's *Hist. de St-Claude* (Montreuil, 1882, vol. II, p. 157). He is summarizing the reforming statutes of 1448, "which were destined to form the foundation of the later discipline" of that great monastery. He writes: "In the abbey, the priories, and all the dependent buildings, no woman open to any suspicion is to be allowed to dwell. Let us note the sense of this regulation. No woman was allowed to enter the cloister or the private monastic buildings; but from other buildings only women of bad reputation were excluded." This may be compared with the bishop of Lincoln's injunction at Bardney in 1437-8: "That none of the monks should...bring any woman, however honest, into the cloister precincts, or, if a woman be brought in by any one, receive her into any familiar converse, such women alone excepted as concerning whom the laws presume that no evil can be suspected" (*Alnwick*, p. 12). Even Cistercians, by this time, admitted women to their churches for the sake of the offerings; the Meaux Chronicle gives us three notices which indicate a most significant development (*Chron. Melsa*, R.S. vol. I, p. 441; vol. II, p. 66; vol. III, p. 35). It was difficult to refuse great folk, even when the monks really wished to do so (*ibid.* vol. II, p. 66), and a whole chapter might be filled with concrete instances. The austere friar Archbishop Pecham himself recognizes the superior claims of richer guests. In his injunctions to Haverfordwest he writes: "Let the prior grant his presence to his community as much as possible, nor let him desert the refectory or the service of compline for all sorts of guests, but only for exalted persons who can notably help or harm the monastery" (*Epp.* p. 783; cf. p. 784). Moreover, he even makes the same allowance for noble ladies as guests for the monks (*ibid.* pp. 164, 804). He recommends the prior of Twyneham to receive an ex-hospitaller not only as personally recommendable but also "especially because, if the Lord will, this man, as one gracious and well-known to great folk, will be able in many ways to serve your commodities" (*ibid.* p. 860; cf. p. 904). Of an abbot who reformed the monastery of Ottobeuren, we are told how "nevertheless, he admitted noble women to parts of the monastery; and, since these were wealthy, they abundantly endowed this monastery," a sentence upon which the eighteenth-century German historian Crusius comments: "They were more useful to him than milch-cows"<sup>1</sup>. The fact that here and there, like all other speculations, this also led rather to pecuniary loss, is not to the present point; it was certainly profitable enough for the custom to maintain its ground, as the household accounts of great people abundantly testify; e.g. in 1304 the Countess of Hereford lodged in the priory of Tynemouth; in 1265 the countess of Leicester lodged at Battle Abbey (*Journ. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.* vol. XVIII, 1862, pp. 323, 331). So do monastic account-rolls; in 1412, at Bicester, "a flagon of Rummey [Greek wine] for John Purcel, Henry Barton and their wives feasting

<sup>1</sup> Cless, II, i, p. 455, note a.

with the prior on the first Sunday in Advent" (Blomfield's *Bicester*, p. 169; cf. Noake, p. 176). The king and queen stayed at Dunstable priory in 1275 (*Ann. Dunstable*, R.S. p. 266). Next century, Bury St Edmunds lodged the queen (*Memorials*, R.S. vol. III, p. xxvi). In 1322, Queen Isabella resided for some time at the monastery of Tynemouth. Queen Eleanor had already lived some time there in 1303 (Dugdale, vol. III, p. 305 a, b). For a queen and many ladies at Peterborough in 1333 see Sparke, *Scriptores*, p. 225. For the queen at St Albans, Dugdale-Caley, vol. II, p. 184; at Lynn (Austin Friars), Flenley, *Six Town Chronicles*, p. 188, A.D. 1496. Two queens spent their last months in the monastery of Bermondsey; Catherine, widow of Henry V and Elizabeth, widow of Edward IV (G. W. Phillips, *Hist. and Ant. of Bermondsey*, 1841, pp. 40, 41). The latter had previously occupied a house within the precincts of Westminster (J. A. Robinson, *Abbot's House, etc.*, 1911, p. 22). At the Benedictine house of Bisham, "in 1518, the king and the princess Mary retired to the abbey on account of the prevalence of smallpox, measles and the great sickness" (E.E.T.S. extra series, vol. XXXII, p. clxix). In that same year, lady Elinor, wife to the marquis of Dorset, lay at Ulverscroft priory apparently for some time (*Journ. Brit. Arch. Ass.* vol. XIX, 1863, p. 182). Even a wedding might take place at a monastery; the emperor's daughter Margaret was married at Romainmotier in 1501 (*Mém. doc. soc. hist. Suisse Romande*, vol. III, p. 282). Or a childbirth; Edward III's son Lionel was born in a monastery at Antwerp; in 1074, a princess was born within the precincts of the monks of Hersfeld (Mabillon, *Ann. Ben.* tom. v, p. 63). The Worcester priory accounts of 25th Henry VI contain "*item, le mydwyffe 3s. 4d.*"; "probably the services of the good woman were required for some lady visitor, as the item occurs in connexion with the names of certain of the nobility then staying at the monastery" (Noake, p. 259). One of Geoffrey de la Mare's children was born at Peterborough abbey (Dugdale-Caley, vol. I, p. 359). Henry I was born at Selby Abbey (*ibid.* vol. III, p. 485). Gilbert, earl of Lincoln, in the same century, was born in Bridlington priory (*ibid.* vol. VI, p. 288). James II of Scotland was born at Holyrood abbey in 1430; indeed, for some generations, the royal court was kept there (*Times Lit. Sup.* Dec. 11, 1919). The entry of noble or even well-to-do females meant also that of a number of waiting-women; St Augustine gave that as his explicit reason for not admitting even his own mother into his clergy-house (*Golden Legend*, Temple Classics, vol. V, p. 59). This is one reason why we find the failure to exclude female servants even more complete than the failure to exclude lady-guests. There were great abbeys which were commonly frequented by women at an even earlier date than those brighter examples of primitive discipline which Mabillon quotes and regrets. At that of St-Bertin (St-Omer), in 1065, "Héribert, qui était à la tête des affaires temporelles de l'abbaye, avait arraché une serve de St-Bertin des mains d'un ravisseur. La nuit suivante, au moment où le moine rentrait dans sa cellule après le chant des matines, il trouva dans son lit la jeune fille qui l'attendait,

prête à lui donner toutes les preuves possibles de soumission et de reconnaissance. La pauvre fille s'était imaginé qu'en la délivrant le moine n'avait pu avoir d'autre but que d'en faire sa maîtresse, et, dans cette même abbaye où jadis les reines elles-mêmes n'auraient osé franchir le seuil de la porte extérieure, une femme de condition servile arrivait sans obstacle, au milieu de la nuit, jusque dans la cellule d'un moine" (Guérard, *Cartulaire de l'ab. de St-Bertin*, 1841, p. lii). Washerwomen and dairy-women, in especial, are frequently forbidden by visitors and other disciplinarians; but they still more frequently reappear. At Bury, about 1280, we do indeed find a male washerman, *lotor* (Dugdale-Caley, vol. III, p. 161); so also at Westminster in 1336 (Pearce, *Monks of W.*, pp. 91, 94); and the Ancient Customs of Cluny prescribe that the washing shall be done by menservants (P.L. vol. 149, p. 762); but, in spite of visitors' prohibitions, monastic account-rolls give frequent reference to the female, the *lotrix*. We have interesting indications as to this person in *Wenlok*, p. 110, an ordinance of Abbot Wenlok of Westminster in 1321, with regard to his own servants. "If a stranger come to the gate who is not imposing—*de apparence*—or known, let him be kept at the gate until it be known to whom he belongs, and that his message has been courteously given to the seneschal or marshal. And let the washerwoman stay at the gate and there receive the linen for the wash, and there again give them back to the officers and to the clerks' servants and to others of the *meinie*." It is probable that the rule was similar for the abbey gate, and at Durham and in other cases; the context makes it probable also that the Westminster washerman was the servant who washed for the infirmary, and therefore must needs live within the precincts. But the employment of women at all for this work, even if the rules had been strictly kept, was contrary to many statutory pronouncements and to the warnings of disciplinarians. Humbert de Romans writes in terms characteristic of an earnest, but experienced and successful, reformer in about 1260. Recalling that clause in the Augustinian Rule which prescribes that the washing should be done by the brethren themselves, or by fullers, he expresses his own preference for the former course, as more dignified for people whose spiritual claims are high while their worldly claims are few. But he adds: "Even though the washing be done by fullers, yet it must never be done by women laundresses" (*Bib. Max. Patrum*, vol. xxv, pp. 627-8). If this rule was actually kept by Humbert's own Dominicans, it certainly was not by other Orders; there are references to washerwomen in Dunkin, vol. II, p. 234; Blomfield, *Bicester*, pp. 186, 190; Hale, *Reg. Worcs.* C.S. p. xcix; Dugdale-Caley, vol. II, p. 549 (Ramsey); Kennett, *Par. Antiq.* vol. II, p. 256; Stewart's *Ely*, pp. 177, 279; Fosbroke, p. 152; *Chron. Abingdon*, R.S. pp. 242, 383 (as early as twelfth century); *Abingdon Obedientary Rolls*, pp. 62, 91; Salt, *Hist. Stafford*, vol. I, App. p. 2; *Coldingham Priory*, Surtees Soc. 1841, App. p. 45, cf. text p. 38; *Durham Account Rolls*, Surtees Soc. pp. 73, 160, 188, 261, 296, 418, 449, 483, 695, 703-4, and introd. p. xiii; *Accounts of the Priory of Worcester*, Worcs.

Hist. Soc. 1907, p. xxvii (apparently several at a time); *Early Computus Rolls*, Worcs. Hist. Soc. 1908, p. 37, cf. p. 52; *St Paul's Eccl. Soc. Trans.* vol. VII, pt 2, 1912, p. 57 (Ramsey, Lewes and Glastonbury); D. Royce, *Landbooc of Winchcombe*, vol. I, p. 129; *Flemyng and Gray*, pp. 74, 98; T. Hearne, *Joh. Glaston.* 1726, vol. I, p. 277; *Lib. Hen. de Soliaco* (Roxburghe Club, 1882, p. 16; Glastonbury); *Ramsey Cartulary*, R.S. vol. III, p. 237.

For the dairy, one of the most significant passages is in the Cistercian General Chapter statutes of 1157 (Martène, *Thes.* IV, 1251, § 58): "Let no milking-women be kept anywhere in our Order. Those who keep such henceforth, let them fast on bread and water for so long as they keep them, both abbots and priors and cellarers. On the other hand, those who have already such women veiled [*i.e.* formally admitted as lay-sisters], let them receive none henceforward." Walter Map praises this Cistercian strictness in the matter of the dairy (*De Nugis*, C.S. p. 45) and the Franciscan Pecham aimed at equal severity (*Epp.* R.S. p. 164). But here, again, we may compare the repeated prohibitions with parallel recorded facts. The Norwich visitations, like many others, betray not only the presence of dairy-women, but also the acknowledged danger of their presence; at Wymondham, the daughters of one dairy-widow "come suspiciously to the chamber of dom James Blome, the chamberlain"; at Bromehill the dairy-woman "generates scandal, but [the deponent] believeth not that the prior hath sinned with her" (*Visitations*, C.S. 1888, pp. 86, 97; cf. p. 88). In one place I have met with a man to do the milking (Dunkin, vol. II, p. 243); but the dairymaid was a regular institution at Worcester (Hale, *Reg. Worcs.* C.S. p. 123 a) and at Abingdon (*Obedientiary Rolls*, p. xxii); cf. Blomfield, *Bicester*, p. 175; Kennett, *Par. Antiq.* vol. II, p. 248; Fosbroke, p. 193 (prohibition). There was a winnowing-woman at Tynemouth (Dugdale-Caley, vol. III, p. 319); others at Bicester (Kennett, *Par. Antiquities*, vol. II, p. 256); again at Marienwald (p. 78). Women worked on the monks' vines and at the vintages of Pontoise (Depoin, pp. 190-1). At St-Martin-des-Champs, in the early fourteenth century, "women are often employed" (*Éc. des Chartes, Positions des Thèses*, 1899, p. 24). At the monastery of "Virgili" in Provence (1301) the visitors found that the keys of the wine and bread stores were kept by "a certain woman" (Bib. Nat. *Fonds de Cluni*, § 11 of the MS. noted in Delisle, 273, § 372). At Worcester, shortly before the Dissolution, in the prior's garden a woman was employed in setting and dressing the beds of saffron (Noake, p. 291). For other women's work at monasteries see Dunkin, vol. II, p. 163; Blomfield, *Bicester*, p. 190; F. A. Hibbert, *Dissol. Monast.* pp. 178, 204; Stewart, *Ely*, pp. 210, 268; *Dioc. Hist. Lincoln*, p. 217; Fosbroke, p. 152; *Abingdon Obed. Rolls*, p. xxviii; *Coldingham Priory*, Surtees Soc. 1841, App. p. 10; *Durham Account Rolls*, Surtees Soc. p. 107. Similarly the aristocratic nuns of St Mary's, Winchester, had twenty men-servants, including four cooks, a baker, a brewer, etc. (Dugdale-Caley, vol. II, p. 457). It will be seen, therefore, how little the frequent

prohibitions really availed; the presence of women, whether as workers or as visitors (or, alternatively, of men in nunneries) is one of the commonest visitatorial complaints, and one of the perils most frankly rehearsed by monastic disciplinarians. For instance, the legatine visitors of St Emmeram at Regensburg, in 1452, found themselves compelled, "experientia teste," to insist upon this danger; henceforth "we strictly decree that no woman ever come into the choir or the apsidal chapels, nor into chapterhouse, nor anywhere within the monastic precincts except the nave of the church; nor shall any Religious introduce any other woman, even though she were his own mother, to any place within the aforesaid precincts... Nor let the brethren ever bathe except in the monastery bath from which women shall be excluded, of what age or rank or condition soever"<sup>1</sup>. The commissaries who set about the reform of the monastery of St Paul's outside the walls of Rome found the statutes so utterly ignored in this respect that "etiam mulieres in dormitorio petebant quandoque loca secreta naturae" (B. Pez, *Thesaurus*, II, iii, p. 302; cf. Fosbroke, p. 152, note a). At a visitation of the Cistercians of Wardon in 1492 it was found "that women of evil fame often enter the monastery, whence a very great decay reigns in Religion" (Dijon, Archives de la Côte-d'Or, *Monastères anglais*, Cahier de Wardon). Here, again, is a Cistercian General Chapter statute of 1516 (Martène, *Thesaurus*, vol. IV, col. 1636): "The General Chapter is provoked by the intolerable abuse of certain abbots who, utterly casting aside the reverence of the monastic state, are not ashamed to keep women [in the monasteries] under colour of their daily domestic necessities, and sometimes to cause their monks to be served with food by the aforesaid women, who therefore frequent the monastic precincts and the chambers of the abbots and monks, to the greatest peril and perdition of their souls: Wherefore we strictly forbid all abbots whatsoever, under the pains and censures to be inflicted by our abbots and commissaries according to the ancient decrees of our fathers, that they presume not to keep any woman whatsoever under pretext of the aforesaid or any other reason, nor to have such women within the precincts or enclosures of their monasteries; nor let them permit any women soever, of whatsoever condition, to enter the monastic precincts; unless indeed they be so noble, excellent, and sublime that we may not deny them ingress without detriment." That saving clause itself (which we have seen already in the Pecham and Ottobeuren cases, and which is frequent elsewhere), is eloquent for the breakdown of original discipline, long before those days in which Mabillon sighed for its re-establishment.

I may here give a few references, out of a multitude, showing how strongly disciplinarians felt the danger of these opportunities of intercourse which they were unable to prevent: Mabillon, *Ann. Ben.* tom. V, pp. 373, 397 (double monasteries, cf. p. 440), 398 (suspicion), 409; Dionysius Carthusianus, *Opp.* vol. IX, p. 531; Alvarus, *de Planctu*,

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Monacensis, no. 14196, fols. 159 a, 161 a.

pp. 240-2; Ailred of Rievaulx in P.L. vol. 195, col. 601; Reiner of Liège in P.L. vol. 204, col. 185; Berthold of Regensburg in Schönbach, vol. VIII, p. 52; Vincent of Beauvais [*Spec. Morale*], Douai, p. 1391; *Spec. Hist.* p. 1248; Meffreth, *Temp.* p. 4 S; Odilo of Cluny in P.L. vol. 133, coll. 56-7; Cassian, *Inst.* lib. v, c. 6 and *Coll.* lib. XII, cc. 1-16; Vitry, *Exempla*, pp. 23, 24, 37-9, 102, 103, 104, 108, 117, 119, 309; *Chron. XXIV. Generalium* (Quaracchi), p. 315; R. Bacon, *Opp. Ined.* R.S. p. 411; Hugh Foliet in P.L. vol. 176, col. 1027; MS. Camb. Univ. Lib. M.m. vi. 4, ff. 254 a ff.; Gerson, *Opp.* vol. II, p. 797; Migne, P.L. vol. 153, col. 681 (Carthusians).

Finally, as general references for the wider study of this subject, I subjoin the following, representing only about half of what I have noted at different times, but sufficient for this purpose: *Sussex Archaeol. Collections*, vol. IX, p. 64 (Boxgrove, 1518); *Bib. Clun.* col. 1460 b; Humbert de Romans, *Expos. Reg. s. Aug.* pp. 610, 611, 628; Guibert de Nogent, P.L. vol. 156, coll. 586 ff.; Odo Rigaldi, *Reg. Vis.* pp. 303, 307, 625; *Penwortham*, p. 111; Wadding, *An. Minorum*, vol. v, p. 360 (1297); Pecham, *Epp.* R.S. pp. 163, 164, 804, 849-51; *Reg. Baldock*, pp. 27, 34, 62, 77, 113; Geiler, *Postill ü. d. 4 Evangelia*, fol. 24 a; *Reg. Trefnant*, fol. xxvii b; Fosbroke, pp. 11, 220, 230, 241; Migne, P.L. vol. 166, col. 1499; *Reg. Orleton*, p. 99 (Wigmore); Martène, *Thesaurus*, vol. IV, coll. 1247, 1251, 1252, 1293; Fowler, *Cistercian Statutes* reprinted from *Yorks Arch. Journal*, 1890, pp. 129, 143; M. Paris, *Chron. Maj.* vol. IV, p. 183; E.H.R. Oct. 1912, pp. 731, 734; *Rev. bénédictine*, 1889, p. 379; *Stud. u. Mittheil.* 1895, pp. 593 ff., visitation of 1252, § 13; Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. III, p. 685; du Breul, *Aimoin*, p. 839, § 26; Reynerus, *App.* p. 176; Henry Bradshaw Soc. vol. XXIII, pp. 40, 41 (important and detailed); *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* C.S. vol. II, pp. 33, 101, 117, 211; *Mélanges d'arch. etc. Éc. franç. de Rome*, vol. IV, p. 355; Calmet, *Hist. de Lorraine*, preuves, tom. II, 1745, p. 549; *St-Trond*, pp. 89, 91, 94-5, 137-9, 141; Trithemius, *Opp. Pia*, pp. 1032, 1035, 1051 ("cum mulierum contagiosus sit aspectus viris spiritualibus," cf. p. 654), 1073; Hardouin, *Concilia*, vol. IV, col. 1145, § 144; Berlière, *Honorius*, pp. 261, 470; Westlake, *Last Days*, p. 103; *Tournus*, vol. II, p. 58; D'Achery, *Spicil.* vol. II, 1723, p. 690; Juvenalis, ff. 44, 51, 57, 58; *Richelieu*, p. 15; *Fleming and Gray*, pp. 2, 9, 31, 42, 44, 55, 79, 87-8, 97, 101, 104, 111; Dugdale-Caley, vol. v, pp. 94, 365, 429, 441; vol. VI, pp. 852, 961; *Prémontré*, pp. 59, 93, 156, 164; *Loos*, pp. 78, 81, 91; Ord. Vitalis, P.L. vol. 188, col. 837; Cless, vol. II, i, pp. 60, 454; Duckett, *Visitations and Chap. Gen.* pp. 141-2, 160, 172; *Almwick*, pp. 12, 15, 16, 19, 21, 45-6, 60, 62, 66, 71-3; Westlake, *Last Days*, pp. 40, 41; A.L.K.G. vol. I, pp. 207-8; Bonnard, vol. II, p. 6; Salter, *Aug. Chap.* pp. 44, 59; Trithemius, *Chron. Hirs.* vol. I, p. 300; Remling, vol. I, pp. 327, 329; de Rosny, pp. 78, 81, 91; Bernard of Tiron, in P.L. vol. 172, col. 1445; Martène, *Thesaurus*, vol. V, coll. 1609, 1631, 1642; Martène, *Rit.* p. 286 b; *Stud. u. Mittheil.* 1894, pp. 40 ff., 244 ff.; Imbart de la Tour, *Hist. MSS. Com. Report*, vol. IX, App. i, p. 77 b; Lea, *Sac. Celib.* vol. II, pp. 22-3.

## THE WITNESS OF THE APOLOGISTS

Thomas Waldensis (Thomas Netter of Walden, 1367-1430) was an English Carmelite who was confessor to Henry V and Henry VI, and who wrote three great folio volumes against Wyclif and the Lollards. Father Blanciotti, who re-edited his works in 1757, calls him "Prince of Controversialists"—*Controversiarum Princeps*. He has to meet very bitter accusations; he himself writes with great bitterness and warmth, applying the most contemptuous epithets to his adversaries; yet it is remarkable how he avoids joining issues with them on the question of monastic morality.

With regard to what provokes Netter most, the denial of the antiquity of the Carmelite Order, it is worth noting that, when modern scholarship began to publish the same doubts, this too frank publication of historical truth came very near to wrecking the great Bollandist *Acta Sanctorum*, even though the authors belonged to an Order so powerful as the Jesuits. The whole story may be found in Cardinal Pitra's *Études sur les Bollandistes*, 1850, pp. 94 ff. He writes: "This quarrel with the Carmelites... touched the honour of the Bollandists, imperilled their existence, and disturbed even the highest powers. Papebroch and Janning [the two principal authors] could only obtain a truce for their *Lives of the Saints* at the expense of infinite trouble, twenty years of perpetual labours and negotiations, two journeys to Rome, and, finally, the suspension of almost all their [printed] work during the seven most critical years... The claim of the Carmelites to trace themselves back to the prophet Elijah could not bear serious examination. [Yet they raised such a formidable storm that a newly-converted prince wrote]: 'If all these Carmelites and Franciscans are not in fact successors of Elijah, at least they are inspired by his spirit of bringing down fire from heaven.' And they very nearly succeeded. In 1683 the cause was deferred to Rome; all the *Acta Sanctorum* were arraigned before the Inquisition; a formal accusation was presented to Innocent XI." Meanwhile the Spanish Inquisition condemned the work; the Roman Inquisition could not be persuaded to any direct defence of the Bollandists; and when, in 1698, Papebroch thought he was dying, he dictated a formal protest in the presence of witnesses: "After 42 years of unceasing toil at the lives of these Saints whose company I hope now to join, I ask for only one thing on earth, that the Most Holy Lord Clement XI be earnestly besought to grant me after my death what in my lifetime I have begged in vain from Innocent XII, [the cassation of this condemnatory decree]. I have lived as a Catholic, as a Catholic I die by God's grace; I have a right also to die a Catholic in men's opinion."

This will explain something of Walden's eagerness to carry the controversy into fields which no longer have any but a passing interest



for the historian. Against a violent diatribe of Wyclif, who urges that it is the Devil who has inspired Christians to separate into what he calls monastic "sects" (Benedictines, Augustinians, Friars, etc.), Waldensis quotes Augustine: "Even some monks are false, and we know some such; but the pious fraternity doth not perish by reason of those who profess to be that which they are not. For just as there are false monks, so are there false clerics and false faithful," and so on<sup>1</sup>. Again, he censures Wyclif as "diabolical" for condemning not only bad monks (of which there has always been a proportion), but monasticism in the mass<sup>2</sup>. He rebukes Wyclif: "Hast thou not, in all things, recited [against clergy and friars] all that thou knowest, nay, more than thou knowest? thou hast imputed vices to them, thou hast uncovered their sins, wickedness, simony, perjury, quarrels, robberies, and others without number. That is how a true son of Ham would do; let him lay bare, and not spare to uncover the hidden shame"<sup>3</sup>. The failings, therefore, are not here denied; but the discoverer is the man with the muck-rake. Again: "If Wyclif would only condemn vices, and things dissonant from Christ's law, in Religion, then **he would find many grave Religious to support him; and, I confess, I would myself consent**"; but he condemns the whole institution<sup>4</sup>. Wycliffites are like the heretics of Augustine's day, who "if any bishop or cleric or monk or nun fall, believe that all are of the same sort, though they cannot all be exposed... Who has not often found this in our Wycliffites? O good Lord Jesus! how do they all echo such scandals of holy men throughout the realm, and in houses of town or of village!"<sup>5</sup> Later, when Netter speaks of Religious as keeping God's law "in every respect," the context shows that he is speaking of their theory rather than of their actual practice; he is combating Wyclif's argument that monasticism is a fundamentally false ideal<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, Waldensis is perfectly aware that he cannot, with any truth, argue from the ideal monk to the actual monk of his own day. After quoting St Jerome's praise of Egyptian monks in the fifth century, he adds: "Perchance some man will sneer here, and censure our modern religious as not living thus; and **I confess my own belief is that this assertion is true; but Christian piety finds here food for sorrow rather than for laughter**. Let us, therefore, who are Christians, steadily weep together over the gaping wounds of Religion, for this is the duty of holy people. Let us not wound Religion to the very vitals; for this is the office of heretics, to whom it hath been granted by their father [the Devil] only to uproot and destroy"<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, in *De Sacramentalibus* (c. 86 *ad fin.*) he quotes from Paschasius Radbertus on monastic decay, **without any attempt to plead that things were improved in his own time**. Before concluding this chapter, I have

<sup>1</sup> *Doc. Fidei*, lib. II, art. ii, c. 13, §§ 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* c. 14, § 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* c. lxxix, § 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* lib. III, art. i, c. 9, § 2.

<sup>5</sup> *De Sacramentalibus*, *Authoris Precatio*, § 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* c. lxxv, c. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Doct. Fid.* lib. III, art. i, c. 8, § 4.

run through again the sixty-five great folio pages of that section which profess to deal directly with Religious life (tit. ix, cc. 73-92); and this enables me to sum up with the greater confidence. If in fact Waldensis could, without exposing himself to incredulous ridicule, have described Religious of his own time in anything like the language which, at the distance of five centuries, is very commonly used nowadays, then it would be difficult to find, in all literary history, an advocate who has so completely missed so magnificent an opportunity of defending his clients, and has betrayed such pusillanimity in the face of a deadly attack.

Reginald Pecock, bishop of St Asaph and of Chichester, published about 1449 his *Repressor of overmuch blaming of the Clergy*. This attempt to meet the Lollards rationally on their own ground gave great offence to many of the stricter orthodox; he was publicly accused in the Council of Westminster (1457), abjured the condemned propositions in order to avoid the stake, and was imprisoned for the rest of his life in Thorney abbey.

On pp. 102-9 he deals with the Lollard plea that, as the clergy are vicious, therefore they cannot truly expound God's law. **His most definite reply is a *tu quoque***; many prominent Lollards are themselves notorious evil livers. Pecock nowhere commits himself to the assertion that vicious clergy are a small minority. Again (pp. 325 ff.) he has to meet the Lollard accusation of lechery against the clergy. **He admits it to have increased since St Jerome's time**; and, here again, his reticences are remarkable. So again (pp. 412 ff.), the Wycliffite accusation of "gluttony, lechery and waste" meets with no categorical denial. When (p. 455) we find him directly meeting a Lollard challenge, and saying: "Let them specify, and prove," we find this to be a quite different question; what he here counters so boldly is their assertion that the Pope makes laws contrary to God's laws. On pp. 476-95, again, he has no direct defence to offer. Pecock's nearest approach to a straightforward rebuttal is on pp. 503 ff., where he meets the Lollard argument that Religious Orders are cause that "much ghostly harm and sin come"; therefore they should be removed, even as the offending hand or foot should be cut off. To this he answers (p. 513) that all the great and notable sin that cometh from, out, and by Religious now had and used in the Church are not of the *essence* of those religious, but an accident thereof; it is a question with each man whether he can best battle with his own frailness in or out of an Order; greater sin would come of cutting away the Religious Orders than has come by their means. "I prove thus" (he says of the above stated argument): "Take me all the Religious men of England which be now and have been in Religion in England these 30 years or more now ended, in which 30 years hath been continual great war betwixt England and France; let see what should have worthe [*become*] of the men in these years, if they had not been made Religious. Let us see how they should have lived and what manner of men they should have been. Whether not they should have been, as wellnigh all other men be and have been in these 34 winters in England, and therefore **they should have been or guileful artificers or unpitiful questmongers and**

**forsworn jurors, or soldiers waged unto France for to make much murder of blood, yea, and of souls,** both on their own side and on the French side? Who can say nay hereto, but that right likely and as it were unscapably these evils and many more should have befallen to those persons, **if they had not been Religious?** And no man can find, againward, that those persons, while they have lived in Religion, have been guilty of so much sin, how much sin is now rehearsed; and of which they should have been guilty if they had not been Religious. Then followeth needs that the Religious in England have been full noble and full profitable hedges and wards throughout these 34 years for to close and keep the hedge in and warn so many persons from so much greater sins into which also, if those Religious had not been, those persons should have fallen and should have been guilty. And soothly this still (as me seemeth) ought to move each man full much for to hold with such Religious, if he be wise for to consider how sinful it is, well nigh all persons living out of Religion, and into how cumbrous a plight the world is brought, that those sins (as it were) may not be left; and how that Religious persons should be of like bad condition if they were not in Religion, and that in Religion they be not of so bad condition, though they be men and not angels and can not live without all sin; and that the sin coming into them while they be in Religion cometh not into them by the Religion, as by the first manner of coming taught in the same chapter, but by the second manner of coming only [*i.e.* not of essence but of accident]. And no more as now and here as for answer to the second seeming skill" [*i.e.* argument].

Even when Sir Thomas More is dealing with the violent assertions of heretics like Tyndale and Fish, it is remarkable how he confines himself almost entirely to repudiating their obvious exaggerations. Tyndale, for instance, accuses the pope of taking an immense tribute from the brothels at Rome,

"and his bishops with all other disciples following the example mightily, and the pope therewith not content, but set up a stews of boys against nature." To this More replies: "Fie, no further, here is too much already. What honest ear can endure such a beastly process, so full of abominable filthy lies, whereof the effect and conclusion is, that sith the Pope and all the whole clergy be such in every kind of abomination, as this abominable beast abominably belyeth them, the faith were faithless and fruitless, by which a man by their preaching believed that any vice were synne. But first he forgetteth yet again the point, and to seek occasion of railing, he turneth the question from the whole Catholic Church to the clergy alone, and sometye to the Pope alone...Howbeit in the clergy as there be bad, so there be also (God be thanked) good, and men of such excellent virtue, that these heretics' hearts even fret for envy to see them. And sith they can in no wise say nay thereto, they blaspheme all holy living. And therefore he that list to learn of good men when Tyndal hath all belied them, yet in the Catholic Church he may find them" (*English Works*, p. 704).

It is rash to dogmatize about the contents of an unusually bulky

folio volume; but I feel sure that, in all More's works, there is not a single sentence which could be taken as counterbalancing for one moment these unfavourable generalizations quoted from equally great and orthodox writers. The nearest, so far as I know, is on pp. 883 ff., in which he deals directly with the current criticism of clerical morals in his day, and the talk of disendowment. All that he there pleads amounts to this, that it would be easy to find as many, or more, bad layfolk than bad clergy. Then, coming to the monks in particular, he asks which of the critics would undertake to become a monk and live as a monk ought to do; or even, to live as the average monk was living then. He proceeds (p. 884): "Then, if they were invited into Religion on the other fashion, and [it] were said unto them thus: **Sirs, we will not bid you live so strait in Religion as these men should have done; come on and enter, and do but even as they did, and then shall you there have a good easy life and a wealthy and much worldly praise therewith: I ween a man should not yet, for all that, get them to go to it. But, as easy as we call it, and as wealthy too, and now peradventure, when our wives are angry, wish our selves therein; yet if it were thus offered, we would play as Aesop telleth.** . . . So ween I that, for all our words, if that easy life and wealthy that is in Religion were offered us, as weary as we be of wedding, **we would rather abide all our old pain abroad, than in a cloister take a Religious man's life for ease.** So that, in conclusion, we should be fain either to put worse in their stead, or keep our old still, till, as they little and little die and depart, God in likewise little and little, as He hath hitherto provided, shall inspire His grace into the breasts of others, and make them fall in devotion and enter into religion, and so succeed in their places." A very similar passage may be found on p. 883. On p. 894, again, he rebukes exaggerated attacks on monastic charity, yet he speaks of actual monastic alms without very much enthusiasm, and his words do not go to prove very much. Moreover (argues he on p. 895) it is also an equivalent for almsgiving that they keep so many servants and thus find them honest work, "and of all alms the chief is, to see them well brought up, and well and honestly guided. In which point though neither part [clergy nor laity] do full their duty, yet I suppose, in good faith, that the spirituality goeth in that point, which is no small alms, rather somewhat afore us [layfolk], than anything drag behind us." He admits that the clergy have relaxed their earlier fasts, and that custom has here overridden the law; but he asks whether the laity also do not love fasting less and less. As to general morality (p. 896), he pleads that both clergy and layfolk are good in the main, "for all that there lacketh not a sort of some such as are very desperate devilish wretches in both, as no man doubteth but there was a very good Church of Christ in his blessed Apostles' days, and yet were there even then many full very naughty and stark heretics too therein." He goes on to argue that foreigners judge our clergy to be as good on the whole as their own (p. 897). But he looks upon his own age as morally decadent (p. 1035): "The time

hath been ere this when honest chaste people would walk so far off from lecherous living... In that while was there much honest cleanness, and by shamefastness much was chastity conserved. But after time that, in words, folk fell unto more liberty, and [that] such as would forbear the doing would yet be well content to fall in the fellowship of foul and filthy talking, then began cleanness greatly to decay." Moreover, he sometimes admits the serious need of reform among the clergy; e.g. pp. 170, 176, 179-80, 183, 224, 227, 231, 366 ff., 618, 1379. He tells three times, of his own accord, stories against monks and nuns which we might rather have expected to find in the *Decameron* than in the works of a pious Lord Chancellor (pp. 154, really 134; 194). Again, on p. 364 he speaks of "the life of hunters, the which out of doubt is more laborious and painful than is the life of Religious persons"; and p. 366: "Surely, if Religious persons had so earnest a mind and desire to the service of Christ as have these hunters to see a course at a hare, their life should be unto them a very joy and pleasure. . . . But, as I said, the cause why that **so many Religious persons so diligently pursue not the ways of Religion as do the hunters**, is the want of the observation of their game, which is nothing else but a lack of love." And twice he shows that he feels the weakness of his defence, and falls back upon a very different line. One of his adversaries, St Germain, has quoted Gerson's strictures upon the clergy: More makes no attempt to plead that Gerson has exaggerated; he only says that Gerson might legitimately write, in the decent obscurity of a learned language, what St Germain had no business to put into plain English and publish among the laity (pp. 873, 937). In other words, he tacitly admits St Germain's points, and pleads mainly for the avoidance of scandal.

Other relevant passages will be found on pp. 624, 704, 735, 868, 870, 871, 876-8. It is impossible in all these cases to separate the monastic from the secular clergy; but one thing may safely be asserted; that if More had been half so convinced of regular life among the majority of the monks as other equally orthodox contemporaries were of preponderant irregularities, then this specially acute mind, with all its legal training and controversial experience, could scarcely have missed again and again the most obvious opportunities of making points in his clients' favour. If no record of that generation had survived beyond More's defence of the monks, it would be very difficult to avoid the conclusion that they had lost ground very seriously in the four centuries preceding the Reformation. Cardinal Gasquet, it is true, does boldly appeal to More as showing Froude's estimate of Tudor monasticism to be thoroughly untrustworthy; but, as usual with his most sweeping assertions, he gives no reference; and it is abundantly evident that here, as on the question of Bible translations, he had not really either read all that More has to say or (more important still) noted all that More leaves unsaid<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Henry VIII and the Eng. Mon.* Revised Popular Edition, 1899, introd. p. viii.

## IMBART AND MODE

P. Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la réforme*, vol. II, 1909, p. 297.

“ Sous le régime délétère de la commende et de la division des biens, dans l’anarchie provoquée aussi par les contestations électorales, les luttes armées, les excès des gens de guerre, c’est la vie collective et, avec elle, ce sont les habitudes qu’elle crée, de travail et de prière, qui ont disparu. Lisez les innombrables témoignages de cette époque : anecdotes des historiens, réprimandes des moralistes ou satires des constitutions capitulaires ou synodales... **Que disent-ils? Toujours les mêmes faits et les mêmes plaintes: la suppression de la vie conventuelle, de la discipline, des mœurs.** Les moines ne restent plus dans leur couvent. Chacun veut vivre à sa guise, avoir sa chambre où il mange et où il dort, sans contrainte et sans contrôle. Plus de réfectoire, ni de dortoir communs. La vie religieuse leur pèse comme les rebutent les vœux qu’on leur demande. Mal vêtus, mal nourris, mendiants et vagabonds, ils préfèrent courir les champs, fréquenter les lieux publics et les tavernes, vivre de la charité publique et du trafic des messes. Heureux les habitants s’ils ne se livrent pas à la maraude, acoquinés aux gens de guerre, portant dagues au côté et ‘arbalestes prodigieuses. Il faut lire les détails révélés par les enquêtes judiciaires sur l’état intérieur de la plupart des grandes abbayes pour se rendre compte de leurs désordres. A Saint-Denis, Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, Saint-Jean d’Amiens, Saint-Martin des Champs, Saumur, il n’y a plus de règle: **les moines vivent publiquement en concubinage,** dilapident les joyaux, les meubles, l’argent pour se faire des revenus. Mêmes excès dans les monastères du Midi. A la Daurade, Saint-Antonin, Saint-Affrique, Bonnefont, Baignes, Grandseve, Cadouin, des mœurs. Les grandes congrégations monastiques ne sont même pas à l’abri de la contagion. Sur l’état intérieur de leurs couvents, les chapitres généraux de Tiron ou de Cluny nous fournissent de navrants détails, à la fin du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les premiers ne nous révèlent pas seulement l’indiscipline de leurs membres, mais dans une foule de leurs criminels’ qui demandent d’énergiques réformes. Les seconds ne cessent de faire entendre leurs doléances. Celui de 1486 constate qu’à Cluny même, ‘la religion a commencé à décliner, et principalement de la chair et des autres biens, l’honnêteté des mœurs.’ Que dire alors des maisons éloignées? ‘Dans la plupart des couvents, nous apprend le chapitre de 1494, les religieux refusent de vivre en commun, convo-

quent des personnes des deux sexes, se livrent avec elles au jeu, à la plaisanterie, au plaisir....' 'Du résidu de leurs prébendes,' ils fraudent les pauvres et disposent à leur gré, thésaurisant dans des armoires ou dans des coffres. Quant aux officiers des couvents, abbés, prieurs, doyens, dignitaires, il y en a plusieurs qui ne résident pas ou résident à peine; mais ils afferment les revenus à des laïques, se rendent à la cour des seigneurs ou à la maison de leurs parents, courent à travers les cités, les châteaux ou les bourgs, vivent avec des séculiers, dépensent en prodiges, ruinent leur ordre et enrichissent les leurs.... En fait, de 1480 à 1500, **dans une foule de monastères ou de prieurés, toute est en ruine; les bâtiments comme les âmes.** À Figeac, Montierneuf, Gigny, Nanteuil, Barbézieux, Chaulieu, Saint-Orens, Domène, Bourbon, c'est-à-dire dans les membres les plus importants de la congrégation, on constate un état complet d'anarchie auquel les chapitres réformistes s'efforcent de remédier."

Several readers having written lately to the effect that the public would be grateful for more translations, I subjoin an English version of this passage.

"Under the harmful régime of *commendam* and the separation of the [superior's] property [from that of the community], in that anarchy which was caused also by contests over elections, by armed conflicts and by the soldiers' excesses, community-life disappeared, and, with it, the habits of work and prayer which it had created. Read the countless testimonies of this age [just before the Reformation]; historians' anecdotes, rebukes from the moralists, satires from humanists and poets, reforming bulls or ordinances or decrees, resolutions of [General] Chapters or of synods.... What do they tell? Always the same facts and the same complaints; the suppression of community-life, of discipline and of morality. The monks no longer stay in their convents. Each wants to live after his own fashion, and to have his own room in which he eats and sleeps without constraint or control. The common refectory and dormitory no longer exist. Religious life is a burden to them, and the vows demanded of them are repellent to them. Ill-clad, ill-fed, mendicant and vagabond, they prefer to wander abroad, to frequent public places and taverns, to live on public charity and on the traffic in Masses. The inhabitants are lucky if these men do not take to marauding and copy the rascalities of the soldiers, with daggers at their belts and cross-bows slung at their necks. There are prodigious numbers of these dissolute robber-monks. To realize their disorderly life, we must read the details revealed by judicial enquiries concerning the inner condition of most of the great abbeys. At St-Denis [etc.] there is no Rule left; the monks live publicly in concubinage, embezzle the valuables and the furniture and the money to make their own private incomes. There are the same excesses in the southern monasteries. At La Daurade [etc.] the Parlement of Toulouse describes no less moral depravation. Not even the great monastic congregations are safe from this contagion. The Chapters General of [the congregations of] Tiron or Cluny give us heart-rending

details at the end of the fifteenth century. The former show us not only the indiscipline of their members, but also, in large numbers of their abbeys or priories, evil life, evil government, criminal deeds which call for energetic reform<sup>1</sup>. The latter give unceasing voice to their complaints. The Chapter of 1486 points out that, even at Cluny, 'Religion has begun to decay, and especially in such fundamental things as obedience, claustration, abstinence from flesh-food and other property, and moral honour.' What, then, are we to say of the distant houses [dependent upon Cluny]? 'In most of the convents' (as the Chapter of 1494 tells us), 'the monks refuse to live in community, invite people of both sexes [to their rooms], and indulge with them in gaming, in jests, and in pleasure....' As to 'what is left over from their allowances,' they dispose of it at their own will, thus defrauding the poor; they lay up treasures in cupboards and chests. As to the officials of these monasteries—abbots, priors, deans and dignitaries—there are several non-resident or scarcely resident at all; such persons farm out their revenues to layfolk, repair to lords' courts or to the houses of their kinsfolk, run about cities, castles or towns, live with worldly folk, spend lavishly, ruin their Order and enrich their own folk.... As a matter of fact, between 1480 and 1500, in large numbers of abbeys or priories everything was ruined, buildings and souls alike. At Figeac [etc.], that is, in the most important monasteries of the congregation [of Cluny], a state of complete anarchy is reported, and the reforming Chapters struggle to mend it."

P. G. Mode, *The Influence of the Black Death on the English Monasteries* (privately distributed by the university of Chicago libraries, 1916), pp. 69, 72.

"In seeking to determine whether this monstrous record of misrule [in the period considered, about 1350-70] is to be attributed to incompetency, to inexperience, or to moral delinquency, it is to be noted that there is nowhere any attempt to condone it. The extenuating circumstance of inexperience is adduced in only one instance.... The serious defect in these men was not their inexperience, so much as their lack of moral qualities.... Perhaps the most severe arraignment of these incumbents is their inglorious prominence in the raiding parties which formed such a characteristic feature of the period. It is not at all uncommon to find an abbot in command of a party that trampled down crops, rifled storehouses, and ended by assaulting and maiming servants." "All that has been said concerning the delinquencies of the abbots and priors applies with equal force to their colleagues. They stole without compunction, not only battering down the walls of granaries but even breaking into abbeys from which they carried away chalices and vestments. Even the sanctity of life was not respected, and the names of many canons appear upon the roll of those pardoned by royal clemency for slaying their fellows."

<sup>1</sup> I possess a transcript of these Tiron reports; they are certainly unfavourable, but not so bad, at their face value, as these words of Prof. Imbart de la Tour imply. G.G.C.



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## ADDITIONS TO VOLUME I

While publishing, according to promise, a list of *errata* for my first volume, I am in a position to reinforce some of my most important statements by farther evidence.

P. 31. *Godfrey of Viterbo*. Add Honorius of Autun, *Elucid.*, in Migne, P.L. vol. 172, col. 1115 a.

P. 97. *Daemonium Meridianum*. For another interpretation see H. C. Lea, *Inquisition in M. Ages*, vol. III, p. 494.

P. 103. *Origin of Mass*. For a very interesting theory of the origin of this rite, far more radical than any put forward on this page, see *The Hibbert Journal* for July 1922, pp. 680-700 (by the Master of Jesus College, Cambridge).

P. 124. *Preaching better than Mass*. See another utterance of St Bernardino of Siena in his collected works, ed. de la Haye, 1745, vol. II, pp. 60-1.

P. 165. *Child devoted to Satan*. Cf. W. Heywood, *Assempri, etc.*, p. 285 and note.

P. 231. *Monastic Tale-bearing*. The bishop of Worms, in 1487, gave an indulgence of forty days of purgatory to each monk of Ilöningen each time that he, "in intention of fervent charity, shall accuse his brethren in chapter when faults are being recorded, or outside chapter, for his transgressions and negligences, and shall admonish them with pious affection of charity; likewise, to those who patiently receive such denunciations and proclamations, and the penalties for their transgressions or negligences" (F. X. Remling, *Urkundliche Geschichte*, u.s.w., vol. II, p. 330).

P. 270. Note 1. An able reviewer having questioned the justice of this accusation against the monks of St-Gall, though without supporting his objections by documentary evidence, it seems worth while to point out that my view is shared by the best German authority on that monastery, G. Meyer v. Knonau, *Ekkehardi V., Casus S. Galli*, Leipzig, 1891, pp. xix-xxii. The real question is, how far abbots had the right of dispensing with their monks for flesh-eating and private property; for this, see Martène, *Comment. in Reg. S. B.* 1690, pp. 427, 429, 431, 531, and Turrecremata, *Comment.* (Venice, 1500), fol. 132 b. These references are sufficient to make the reader understand why all orthodox reformers of the later Middle Ages, such as Dionysius Carthusianus and Gui Jouenneaux, took such pains to explode the notion that abbots had the right of practically abrogating those clauses of the Benedictine Rule.

P. 300. *Philip Augustus and the Cistercians*. This story is told also of John de Courtenay and the Cistercians of Ford Abbey; see *Abbeys*, by M. R. James, 1925, p. 112. The date in this case would be about 1272.

P. 432. *The Monastery as a fortified camp against the devil*. See St Antonino, *Summa Major*, pars III, tit. XVI, c. 10, § 9 (ed. 1740, vol. III, p. 636 c).

P. 442. *Infant Damnation*. See Boccaccio, *Comment. on Dante*, ed. Milanese, lezione XI; scarcely less cogent for this purpose even if, as some maintain, the passage is by some later medieval lecturer.

P. 445. *Chances of Hell*. The multitude of the damned is emphasized also by Camb. Univ. MS. 1, i, iii, 8, fol. 145. Dionysius Carthusianus conceives the number of the damned as so preponderant that they may with poetic licence be spoken of as *all* mankind; they are probably more numerous than the saved, the angels, and the devils all added together; the elect may *roughly* be compared to the handful which escaped with Noah, as against the multitudes who perished in the Flood (*Opera*, vol. IV, p. 580; vol. VII, pp. 219, 257; vol. XI, p. 224; vol. XII, p. 65; vol. XIII, p. 657). We could not seriously set against this sort of evidence the vague words of St Thomas which a critic quotes against me: "It is, however, better to say that God alone knows the number," even if we did not know from St Thomas himself that he took it for granted the damned would outnumber the saved. One of the heretical propositions for which Raymund Lull was condemned in the fourteenth century runs thus: "God hath such love for His people that almost all folk in the world shall be saved; for, if more were damned than saved, Christ's mercy would be without great charity" (Eymericus, *Directorium Inquisitorum*, pars II, quaest. ix; ed. Rome, 1585, p. 275, col. 2 c). St Bernardino of Siena uses a still more painful Biblical illustration. Six hundred thousand Israelites went forth from Egypt with Moses, to whom God promised the Land of Canaan; yet, by their own sins, all perished in the desert save two (*Opp.* ed. de la Haye, 1745, vol. III, p. 437 b; another passage, vol. II, p. 126 a). I am informed that a book was published at Brussels by F. X. Godts on the paucity of the saved, *De paucitate salvandorum quid docuerint Sancti*, which is of great historical value, but practically impossible to procure, since it was suppressed by the ecclesiastical authorities almost immediately after publication (1895 or a little later). Long after the Reformation, Malebranche takes it as an admitted fact; one of his characters argues: "But if you are so charmed with the idea that God acts solely in pure kindness to men, how comes it that there will be twenty times, or a hundred times more damned than saved?" (*Entretiens sur la métaphysique*, 1688, ent. 9, q. iii, *Œuvres*, ed. Simon, 1846, vol. I, p. 194).

P. 466. *Processus Belial*. See Brit. Museum MS. Lansdowne 397, fols. 169-71: "How the Devil carried on a suit against Christ, de-

manding that the race of mankind should be given back to him." Also Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, bk III, dist. xix a, where he tells us that the Cross was set as a mousetrap for the devil, and baited with Christ's blood.

P. 484. *The Host and Mass in Witchcraft*. See also the *Dunstable Chronicle*, R.S. p. 498. Felix Hemmerlin, about 1450, wrote a treatise justifying the exorcism of thunderstorms by displaying the sacred Host, a practice which seems to have begun to find severe critics (*Tract.* fol. 20 b; Reber, p. 336). Compare the following anecdote from J. Thorpe, *Custumale Roffense*, p. 208: "Notwithstanding the superior abilities and learning of bishop Langdon [1422-34], an anecdote is recorded of him in a register of one of his successors, which shows him to have entertained a notion deemed extravagant even in that age of superstition. It was, that a wafer designed for the sacramental host might be applied as a specific remedy in a fever. This imputation is mentioned in a process before bishop Lowe against John Parrs, vicar of Malling, who was charged with having used divers incantations over the hosts, and of having administered them to persons labouring under that complaint. Being examined upon oath, he confessed that he had taken wafers, but not such as were consecrated—that he scored them quarterwise with a knife, uttering these words, 'Petrus autem jacebat super Petrum,' but *Peter lay upon Peter*; and that having observed this form with six wafers, he gave them to the diseased, who were to eat one of them a day. He admitted some of his patients having informed him of their being healed by them, but of this he was ignorant, and he owned that he had received a little money which he gave to the use of lights for the church. He concluded his defence with this plea, that in the time of the right rev. John Langdon, late Bishop of Rochester, he was examined concerning these matters, and that the bishop ratified and commended the work, and desired his servants might be instructed in the art." The theft of consecrated Hosts for purposes of witchcraft is dealt with also in a bull of Innocent XI, *Ad nostri apostolatus* (1677), § 1. The *Ayenbite of Inwit* (E.E.T.S. 1876, p. 40) condemns the sacrileges of that time: "First, when men treat foully the body of our Lord, as do the heretics and witches, and the evil priests, for to win [money]."

P. 495. *Good and Bad Masses*. Notabile est, quod scribit Hostiensis (Henricus de Segusia, Cardinalis, f. 1271) in *Summa* sua quae vocatur *Aurea* (ed. Venetiis, MDLXX, f. 64 c; lib. I, c: *de corpore vitiatis ordinandis, vel non*) "Quid enim si maritus clericum cum uxore inveniat, et de membris inimicis vindictamumat? certe imputatur presbytero.... Nec est verum quod dicunt rustici, quod ubi ab hostibus [sacerdos eunuchus] factus est, non possit celebrare nisi testes siccos et pulverizatos gerat in bursa, quasi tunc intelligitur habere omnia sua membra; sed non curo utrum habeat testes siccos vel viriles: quia defectus illius membri nec deformitatem nec debilitatem inducit." Confer Franco Sacchetti, *Novella* xxv, quae sic intitulatur: "Messer

Dolcibene per sentenza del Capitano di Forlì castra con nuovo ordine un prete, e poi vende li testicoli lire ventiquattro di bolognini"; necnon *Novella* cxi *ad fin.* Unde liquet, rusticos speculationem valde ingeniosam excogitasse. Sciebant enim, nefas esse viro exsecto ad sacerdotium promoveri; quapropter remedium more suo meditati sunt; eviratus quidem sacerdos, sed vis sacri hoc modo conservata.

P. 531. *Dancing reprobated.* I have since printed a mass of evidence for this in *The Medieval Village*, pp. 93, 276, 559 ff.; *Hist. Teachers' Miscellany*, March and April 1925, and *Review of the Churches*, July 1925. See also H. Rashdall, *Univ. of Europe*, vol. 1, p. 204 note 1; Franz, *Drei Minoritenprediger*, p. 84; Petrus Cantor in MS. Peterhouse Camb. 218 (earlier pressmark 78) s.v. *De choreis*.

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## ADDITIONS TO CHAPTER XXVII

(a) Professor O. Odložilík, of the University of Prag, has directed my attention to the works of Mathias de Janov, a Bohemian who had been professor at Paris and is therefore often called Mathias Parisiensis. He wrote in very plain terms against the pretensions of the regular clergy, especially the friars, and against the idolatry into which, as he asserted, image-worship had degenerated among many of the uneducated classes in Bohemia. But he took care to emphasize his own acceptance of ecclesiastical precepts in favour of reverence for images; and he explicitly submitted his writings to the judgement of the Church.

He regards the monasticism of his day (about 1370) as an unfavourable influence in religion<sup>1</sup>. There are very few indeed who resemble the early holy fathers, "and, if there be any such, they lurk in hiding and seclusion and are silent, being of no account among their brethren." The majority get their own way by holding firmly together and overawing the bishops and other authorities. They leave the poor in the mire, while they curry favour with the rich and noble, by whose help they build themselves magnificent convents and churches. They have debased the moral currency by making confession easy to any sinner who will pay them well; their system of "fraternity" is specially lucrative in this way. "And on this account sinners (to wit, usurers, robbers, adulterers and others who have horrible crimes on their conscience,) flee comfortably to them, as to men who are notoriously lenient, but for lucre's sake; and thus they flee from their [natural] superiors, as men who will sternly rebuke them." In other words, Mathias judges the friars practically as his contemporaries Chaucer and Langland and Gower judged them.

<sup>1</sup> *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, ed. V. Kybal and O. Odložilík, vol. II, pp. 177, 183-4, 248; vol. III, p. 60; vol. IV, pp. 94, 387-8, 392-3.

(b) In 1394, Boniface IX issued a mandate for the reform of the Cistercian, Cluniac and Premonstratensian houses in England, "which are known to be in no small need thereof" (*C. P. Letters*, vol. iv, p. 289).

(c) The Rev. Watkin Williams has directed my attention to the prose writings of Alain Chartier, whom I knew only superficially through his poetry. The serious value of these writings for social history is fully brought out by Pierre Champion in his *Histoire poétique du XV siècle*, vol. i, p. 136. In Chartier's political treatise called *L'Espérance*, written in 1428, he represents Understanding as telling Faith how shocked she is "when I see how the priests that are dedicated to God, and the monks that have been blessed, and the clergy, are mocked more than all other folk, and attacked first of all, and the goods of the Church are abandoned to prey and to rapine." Faith, in reply, explains how "the ambition and avarice and evil example set by priestly life is the cause why the Church is afflicted and her honour thus diminished." Chartier goes on to speak in very strong language of "the negligence of prelates and the dissolute life of priests"; and, on a later page, he asserts that profit-seeking and concubinage are general, and that it would be better to revoke the law of sacerdotal celibacy; and, finally, that a revolution must come unless some radical amendment can be worked. In all this he makes no attempt, apparently, to distinguish between the secular priesthood and the monks whom he couples with them when he first undertakes to discuss this thorny question. (*Œuvres*, ed. A. Duchesne, 1617, pp. 304, 306-7, 387-90.)

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